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NATURE IN THE AGE OF LOUIS XIV

NATURE IN THE AGE OF LOUIS XIV

By

PHYLLIS E. CRUMP

M.A., Lecturer in French and Adviser to Women Students in the University of Manchester

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PREFATORY NOTE

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PHYLLIS E. CRUMP.

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INTRODUCTION

THERE has long existed a tradition that there is no appreciation of external Nature in the seventeenth century, that indeed it plays no part at all, except in the Fables of La Fontaine and in the pastoral of the first thirty years, which has its setting, at least, in Nature. Various explanations have been offered to account for its absence ; attention has been drawn to the non-existence of the theme in the Middle Ages and sixteenth century, and to the consequent lack of traditional foundation ; mention has been made of the mechanical view of Nature held by Descartes, which would help to lessen its importance ; the suggestion has been offered that the feeling for Nature, repressed for reasons of custom and fashion in literature, has found vent in the pictorial art of the age, and it has been stated, in imitation of Stendhal, that since Paris has remained supreme in literature in the seventeenth century, the landscape round Paris, in its flat monotony, is responsible for the dearth of any such feeling.[1] Most of these critics concur in the opinion that the Frenchman, and, before all, the Frenchman of the age of Louis XIV., is primarily sociable by disposition, and that he only admires Nature when he has nothing else to do. He develops the herd instinct by converting his country residences into veritable cities and his capital into the

[1] M. Edouard Droz, *Sur le Sentiment de la Nature dans la Littérature française*, 1898.

centre of the universe ; his interest is concentrated in himself, and his literature and his art reflect his own sophisticated existence, while the external world is something beyond and beneath his refined consideration.

It is true that the statements of certain writers of the classical age have contributed towards strengthening this impression stamped upon the nineteenth century and upon our own day ; we find Madame de Rambouillet observing that " Des esprits doux et amateurs des belles-lettres ne trouvent jamais leur compte à la campagne," and Mademoiselle de Scudéry insisting on reading to her friends " many lines in praise of the King " in order to prevent them from being bored in the orangery of Versailles, where the party was resting after its stroll through the palace grounds. Or, on another occasion, we have Racine, in a letter to La Fontaine in 1662, when he was staying at Usez, in Provence, complaining that the Muses never come to the provinces, inveighing against the overpowering heat of June and the " piercing, importunate cry " of the grasshoppers, or, in the winter of the same year, lamenting his exile from the capital and abusing Usez as " the most accursed town in the world, where their sole aim is to kill each other, or to hang each other reciprocally all day long." But far more vigorous than these are the opinions expressed by the nineteenth century on the subject, opinions which are, we believe, largely responsible for the view that is commonly held to-day ; Stendhal, for instance, affirms that before the episode of the flight of M. de Nemours into a group of fir trees in the *Princesse de Clèves* we have no instance in French literature of a feeling for Nature ; Sainte-Beuve

believes that, if we except La Fontaine, we have no striking pictures of Nature in this age, and Théophile Gautier derides the stiff and ordered gardens of Louis XIV. Less dogmatic than these is Taine in his analysis of the modern feeling for Nature, the craving for freedom from ourselves which drives us to seek in the animal and vegetable world the reflection of our own lives lightened of the heavy responsibility of the human brain and wrapped in the moral independence that proceeds from a lack of knowledge.[1] " Nous ne disons plus comme au dix-septième siècle que la campagne est vide," he says, and at the end of his description of what the country can be to the contemporary mind he adds : " Poésie, philosophie, peinture, mœurs, tout y conduit. Il n'en était pas ainsi du temps de La Fontaine. On n'a qu'à comparer les paysages de Poussin et de Pérelle à ceux de Decamps et de Rousseau, pour comprendre le changement qui s'est fait dans cette voie depuis deux siècles. A présent tout le monde y marche parce qu'elle est ouverte. Au temps de La Fontaine, il n'y avait, je crois, qu'une ressource, le génie, pour la frayer."

Taine does not explicitly deny here the existence of a feeling for Nature in La Fontaine's time. He does, however, imply that any such feeling is very restricted and very rare, and the charm of some of the finest pages of nineteenth-century prose lends force to his ideas. The self-created sympathy between man and Nature which he describes forms the chief interest of much of the descriptive literature of his own time, and is, as he says, an invention of modern times. " Notre âme se trouve doucement dans cet être plus simple, et nos

[1] *La Fontaine et ses Fables*, 1853. Pt. II, Ch. II, *Les Bêtes*.

images n'en sont que plus délicates, parce que nous sentons qu' à la réflexion elles devront s'évanouir." Are we justified, however, because of the lack of this subtle and delicate sympathy in the classical age, in denying it all appreciation of external Nature ? After all, in our own day, there are writers and painters of considerable merit for whom only her surface attributes have any value.

In spite of the weight of these opinions there remains a certain number of writers of the present day who discern in the seventeenth century a more widespread love of Nature than has usually been believed. M. Faguet insists that a large number of poets between 1620 and 1660 have followed the example of Racan in singing of the beauties of Nature ;[1] M. Mornet cites a score of writers who actually indulged in the pleasures of a country house to satisfy their taste for retreat, or who wrote of the joys of an existence on the land.[2] In several articles we have met with the suggestion that d'Urfé, Racan or La Fontaine are less exceptional in their subject matter than is commonly supposed. We believe that an examination of the facts will show that, though the amount of appreciation of Nature is relatively much less between 1605 and 1690, in proportion to the works of art produced, than it is between 1760 and 1800, and though two striking characteristics[3] of this later period are rare in the earlier, yet there is in the classical age a profound love of Nature and of country life and labours, and a considerable class of literature

[1] *Histoire de la Poésie française de la Renaissance au Romantisme*, 1923, t. I, Ch. IV.

[2] *Le Sentiment de la Nature en France de Jean-Jacques Rousseau à Bernardin de Saint-Pierre*, Paris, 1907.

[3] Namely a sense of colour and the idea of an interchange of sympathy between man and Nature.

and art dealing with the subject, as well as a practical demonstration of the feeling in the lives of the people, in their walks and excursions in and around the capital, in their sojourning in the country, when they require a retreat from the town, and in the devoted care which they bestow upon the laying out of their private gardens and public parks.

Moreover, there is a substantial traditional basis for this affection. Mediæval French literature, both lyric and epic, has a very fair proportion of descriptive verse, and in the sixteenth century Marot and the *Pléïade* provide us with a good background of poetry in which external Nature either forms the chief interest, or at any rate is present to a large extent. The appreciation of Nature through the senses, by a delight in her sights and sounds, the affectionate interest in, though not always accurate knowledge of, some special form of Nature, for pool, spring or tree, the desire for escape to the country from the labours of town, and especially the local patriotism which reveals itself in an intimate fondness for some particular spot, probably the birth-place of the poet ; all these qualities are familiar to us in the poetry of the sixteenth century. Not infrequently, too, we find the picture of some episode of country life, such as in the *Vanneur de Blé* and *A Cérès* of Du Bellay or in the *Complaintes* of Clément Marot.

We must look further back still, if we are to realize the full importance of tradition in this subject. The early part of the seventeenth century owes a good deal to the influence of the *Pléïade*, but the classical era little by direct imitation. Here again, however, the main source is so obvious as to need no more than a brief mention. The Georgics of Virgil, certain Odes,

Epodes and Satires of Horace, besides the poetry of Calpurnius, Catullus and Propertius, have made the age of Louis XIV. thoroughly familiar with the subject of country life, the joy of retreat into Nature, the pleasures of country pursuits and the recreation and profit to be derived from the cultivation of the land. Rejoicing in the fertility of nature and in the strength and variety of her productive powers is likewise a well-known theme in an age trained from its infancy in the appreciation of the Latin poets. There is a firmly established tradition here which has been too often overlooked.[1]

Lastly we would suggest that the Italian poets have contributed not a little towards popularizing the subject of Nature. Though the influence of Petrarch was on the wane, his poetry, either in the original or in translations, must have been familiar to a large number of French writers. In addition, Ariosto and Tasso, with their descriptions of marvellous islands, revive an old lyric theme, which belonged to mediæval French poetry and had lain dormant for many years. Nor must we forget the influence of Italian and Flemish painters on French art and the consequent improvements of landscape painting, or the practice of cultivating gardens, which, though well-established in France long before the seventeenth century, is certainly largely modified by the Italian exponents of the art.[2]

It must not be supposed that the feeling for Nature in France is merely the product of these combined influences. The seventeenth century is too forcible

[1] The Georgics also contributed largely towards stimulating the interest of the seventeenth century in practical gardening.

[2] We might mention also the Italian and Spanish influence on the French Pastoral.

mentally not to impress its own mark upon the theme and to alter and adapt it to suit its own requirements. In the very varied forms in which it is expressed a part is due to influence from outside, but more to the qualities which belong to the epoch as a whole and to the temperament of the individual writer. Moreover, we shall see that, with the exception of La Fontaine, the most obvious frames for the theme, the pastoral drama and the *Précieuse* poetry are not those, on the whole, in which the most sincere sentiment is found, for there the element of Nature is largely dependent upon the fashion of the time.

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CHAPTER I

THE ART OF GARDENING

Gardening is one of the great arts of the seventeenth century, and the development of gardens reflects, throughout the course of this age, the ideas and traditions with which we are so familiar in literature and in the social life of the people ; the forceful, almost brutal, love of power which follows the Renaissance, the subtle elegance and complicated refinement of the Précieuses, and finally the austere simplicity, the balance and poise of the classical ideal. The work of Le Nôtre in the Park of Versailles, with its infinite dignity and perfect sense of proportion, is not a hackneyed repetition of a style that has been familiar from mediæval times ; it is rather the perfection of an art which has been slow in the making, growing under the hand of Olivier de Serres and Boyceau, developing now in one direction with Claude Mollet, now in another with La Quintinie, and finally achieving that strength and symmetry which mark the garden of the last half of the age of Louis XIV.

The garden of the sixteenth century owes its origin to the famous gardens of Italy, of the type of the Villa

d'Este at Tivoli, and the Boboli in Florence, whose great aim, so M. l'Abbé Chevalier tells us,[1] was coolness, shade and mystery. "They were vast compartments with avenues of great trees. Palisades of hazels and thorn hedges, long *berceaux* of woodwork, covered walks, and baths," says one writer,[2] "everything was here united to charm the eye and encourage meditation and reflection."

Barbet[3] quotes an interesting passage from André Motet, Steward of the King's gardens, as his father had been before him. He describes the principles of the pleasure garden or park: "Une grande avenue d'arbres, à double ou triple rang, perpendiculaire à la façade . . . avec un grand demi-cercle ou carré au commencement . . . Puis, en face de derrière . . ., les parterres de broderie d'icelle," arranged, that is, so that they may be seen from the windows without hindrance. Then followed . . . "les parterres de compartiments, le gazon, les allées, palissades hautes et basses faisant en sorte que la plupart des allées aboutissent et se terminent toujours à quelque statue ou centre de fontaine" . . ., and finally, he adds that he would place statues and build grottos, "ès lieux convenables, sans oublier les volières, jets d'eau, canaux

[1] M. l'Abbé Chevalier: *Mémoire sur la Vigne, les Jardins et les Vers à Soie à Chenonceaux*. Tours, 1860. M. Chevalier also, in his *Histoire de Chenonceaux* (Lyon, 1878, Chapter XXII), describes the work of Bernard Palissy for Catherine de Medici at Chenonceaux, pointing out the modifications that he introduced into the formal, Italian style of Passelo, which had then become popular in France. While retaining the grottos, cabinets, etc., of the Italian gardens, Palissy endeavoured to make his garden harmonize with the site and thereby unite the *jardin-bibelot* with the *jardin-paysage* of more modern days. His imitators, however, reproduced the first characteristic rather than the second, and the early seventeenth century garden becomes more, rather than less, artificial, until such time as Le Nôtre established the stern simplicity of Versailles.

[2] Eugène Muntz: *Histoire de l'Art pendant la Renaissance.*

[3] L. A. Barbet: *Les Grandes Eaux de Versailles*, 1907, p. 258.

et autres ornements pour former le jardin de plaisir parfait."

The above description of Motet is a comparatively simple one. The *jardin-bibelot*, as M. Arvède Barine[1] calls it, coming from Italy and established in France partly through the influence of the brothers Francini, was a much more complicated and elaborate affair. "Fountains, cascades, groves, arbours, and hedges, trellises and lattice-work, flowers for pleasure and medicinal herbs, grottos and underground caves, volaries and hydraulic organs, statues and groups, obelisks, vases, pavilions covered with lattices and interspaced with shady cabinets (retreats arranged for purposes of gallantry) surrounded the beds, or divided it into diverse separate gardens. Troughs of marble with fountains and cascades falling over artificial rocks completed the somewhat cold, symmetrical decoration of the Italian garden." Its French descendant in the sixteenth century has adopted the geometrical style of the *parterres* where the imagination of the artist finds its outlet in the composition of elaborate designs :[2] arabesques, heraldic figures, allegorical forms and other popular devices. The extreme complexity of the pattern, within a comparatively small space, was often the stamp of the most skilful and refined gardener.

Such then is the French garden as we find it at the beginning of the seventeenth century, a thing of rigid tradition and multiple conventions, an art of rule and line in which, at first sight, the individuality of the

[1] A. Barine : R. des D.M. 1er Oct. 1899 : *La Transformation des Mœurs. Naissance de la Vie de Salon.*

[2] A. Mangin : *Histoire des Jardins anciens et modernes.* 1887. Ch. X.

owner seems to have small lot or part ; which is often a setting for the amorous intrigues of the nobility, or at best a mere means of displaying the wealth and power of a society of rich courtiers, and in which a true appreciation of Nature seems of small importance. Not only is it subject to the most conventional treatment, but it is full of artifices and quaint deceits, a continuous series of shocks and surprises, calculated to arrest the attention and stimulate the curiosity of the courtier, but hardly likely to arouse a love of Nature in the heart of the artist or poet. Yet precisely in the vast amount of care and knowledge that went to build up these elaborate pleasances, in the wealth expended and the labour ungrudgingly given for the perfection of the art, do we find a real feeling for Nature and an appreciation of her powers, a love of her outward manifestations, which is different indeed from that of our own day, but which, when we consider it in relation to the age to which it belongs, is none the less profound and sincere.

We must distinguish then, in the seventeenth century, between two distinct types of garden, whose detailed qualities are many of them the same, and whose main principles vary in extent and quantity, rather than in essence. In considering these types it is not possible to set an ultimate date to the disappearance of the first, since the second proceeds gradually from its predecessor ; we may, however, roughly intimate that the intricately constructed *jardin-bibelot* remains popular in France until round about the year 1670, when it is gradually transformed and simplified by the art of Le Nôtre to the proportions of Versailles, which remains the masterpiece of the art of France until the end of the

century, when the Dutch influence is made manifest and the features and form are altered again.

The long list of gardening and agricultural manuals proves the popularity of the art in this age. Thus Charles de Sercy[1] towards 1677 publishes a substantial list of "Livres de Jardinage," including fifteen volumes, varying in price from ten to twenty francs, eleven books treating exclusively, or in part, of the growing of fruit-

[1] We give a brief list of some of the more important manuals of the time, which may be of interest to the reader. It is by no means complete :—

Olivier de Serres : *Théâtre de l'Agriculture et Ménage.* 1600.
Boyceau : *Traité du Jardinage.* 1638.
Le Jardinier Français. 3rd ed. 1672.
Le Jardinier Royal. 1677.
Aristote : *Instruction pour le Jardin Potager.* 1678.
Nouveau Traité de la Culture des Jardins Potagers. 1692.
Le Jardinier Solitaire. 1704.
La Quintinie : *Instruction pour les Jardins Fruitiers et Potagers.* 1697 (3rd ed.).
Charles Estienne and Jean Liébault : *L'Agriculture et La Maison Rustique.*
P. Morin : *Remarques Nécessaires pour la Culture des Fleurs.* 1678.
L'Abbé de Vallemont : *Curiosités de la Nature et de l'Art.* 1715.
A. N. Dézallier d'Argenville : *La Théorie et la Pratique du Jardinage.* 1711.

The following were published by Charles de Sercy :—

Le Jardinier François.
Les Délices de la Campagne, ou Suite du Jardinier Français.
La Manière de cultiver les Arbres Fruitiers, etc.
Instructions pour les Arbres Fruitiers, par le Sieur Vautier.
Théâtre des Jardinages; etc., par Claude Mollet, premier Jardinier du Roy.
Le Jardinier Royal, etc.
L'Abrégé des bons Fruits, etc.
Nouvelle Instruction pour connoistre les bons Fruits, etc., par Dom. Claude S. Estienne, Feüillant.
Remarques Nécessaires pour la Culture des Fleurs, etc., par Pierre Morin, Fleuriste.
Instruction facile pour connoistre toutes sortes d'Orangers et de Citronniers . . ., etc.
Nouveau Traité pour la Culture des Fleurs . . ., etc.
Abrégé pour les Arbres Nains et Autres . . ., etc., par I. L. Notaire de Laon.
Nouveau Traité des Oeillets . . ., etc., par L.C.B.M.
Traité de la Culture des Orangers, Citronniers, Oliviers et Grenadiers.
Instruction pour Elever, Nourrir, Dresser, et Instruire et Panser toutes sortes de petits Oyseaux de Volière . . ., etc. "Vous aurez dans peu de temps un Traité pour les Jardins Potagers," adds the compliant publisher.

trees and vegetables and mainly utilitarian in purpose, and five expounding the cultivation of flowers and of the trees most suited to the " ornamental " or pleasure garden. In addition to these there is a large output of works of this kind in the seventeenth century, beginning with the *Théâtre de l'Agriculture et Ménage* of Olivier de Serres in 1600 and the *Traité du Jardinage* of Boyceau in 1638 and concluding with the complete and careful manual of Dézallier d'Argenville in 1711 : *La Théorie et la Pratique du Jardinage.* D'Argenville, in his first chapter, explains the object of his book and states his claim to produce an original work. This is the first time, he declares, that a gardening manual has been written which deals exclusively with the pleasure garden and has no ulterior and utilitarian motive. Before him, only Boyceau and Mollet, he affirms, deal with beautiful gardens, the others neglect this side of the art, La Quintinie, for instance, treating of fruit trees and vegetables rather than of ornamental gardens. " Y a-t-il rien de plus agréable et de plus délicieux qu'un beau jardin," he asks, " bien disposé, et bien entretenu, rien dont l'aspect contente plus les yeux, et donne plus de satisfaction aux gens de bon goût ? " We have here, in fact, the description of gardening as an art, without any other design than the construction and adornment of the pleasance itself.

The *Agriculture et Maison Rustique*, by the doctors Charles Estienne and Jean Liébault, was published many times[1] in the course of the period, and translated not a few; it speedily became a household work, as its far-sighted authors had no doubt predicted, confining themselves strictly to the needs of the average " père

[1] The first edition appeared in Latin in 1554.

de famille," who had a taste for managing his own estates and a reasonably large income. Reinforcing their statements with references to the Romans and Greeks, they exhaust every possible circumstance which affects the rustic life of the ideal landowner; the very diseases which may afflict his servants and his cattle are foreshadowed and remedied. From his apiaries (ruled by the Virgilian King-Bee) to his distilleries and silk-worm nurseries every want and every danger is carefully analysed. He has his pastureland, his osier-plot, his elm-plantation, his alder and his willow grove and his fish-pond, and that in addition to his already extensive garden, orchard and farm. Beyond these he has his heronry and his woods for the preservation of game, both large and small, and lastly his vineyards. Yet, in spite of the apparent wealth necessary for such a husbandman, the book is a popular one, as its frequent reprinting shows. The seventeenth-century landowner takes his business seriously, and sets himself to develop every part of his estate to its fullest advantage, both the practical and the ornamental alike.

Of the manuals devoted to the art of growing fruit-trees an important one is the *Jardinier français*,[1] stated by John Evelyn, in his preface to the English translation, to be "the very best that was Extant on the subject." This translation is specially interesting for its marginal notes, by the hand of Evelyn himself, showing us some curious details in the different methods of fruit-growing which existed in France and England at the time. The group of works to which this book

[1] The earliest edition in the British Museum is the third, published in 1672.

belongs is perhaps the largest of its kind; it comprises also the *Jardinier Solitaire*, whose short Preface begins with the following confidence from the author to his readers : " The culture of gardens has at all times been considered the first art in the world; nothing affords more pleasure than to employ oneself therein. It is this pleasure that I commend to a man of inquiring mind, who, shaking off the noisy life of the world, and inspired by feelings of piety, chose to pass the remainder of his days in his country house, in order to taste the happiness of a life of innocence, that one finds in rustic life." The definitely moral note struck in this explanation is common among the apparently utilitarian works of the age; the practice of fruit-growing, etc., is not solely for the provision of gastronomic amusement, the husbandman sees his labours, as Virgil did in the Georgics, as a present means of communion with Nature and a way of preserving the fine qualities of mind which are warped by his dwelling among cities.

The *Hortorum Libri*[1] of René Rapin is an instance of a somewhat different class of literature. Rapin, who was closely acquainted with the Georgics and also with country life, was in an excellent position to produce a semi-literary, semi-scientific work. His four books, dealing in turn with Flowers, Woods, Water and Orchards, combine a sound practical sense and knowledge of his subject with a real feeling for Nature and for poetry, which robs his " Gardens " of all didactic aridity and bears the reader with him into the groves of Marly and St. Cloud. Incidentally it is interesting to

[1] R. Rapini : *Hortorum Libri, Eclogae, liber de Carmine Pastorali, Odae* 2 pt. 1672, 12°.

note that Rapin finds it necessary to devote more space to Flowers than to the other three parts, and that in spite of the wonders of the waters of Versailles: "I have not been so nice in Wood, and Water, as in Flowers," he says in the Preface to the edition of 1673,[1] "whose charms forced me to be a little more exuberant," and indeed he cites a long list of ancient authors who wrote of flowers "in verse of flowing Garlands . . . Cratinus, Hegesias, Anacreon, Sappho, Pancrates, Choeremon, Eubulus and innumerable others." Did Rapin feel that some justification was necessary for the space he gave to this subject? Possibly, at a time when the great master in the art of gardening was Le Nôtre, with his architectural designs.[2]

We have considered briefly the three types of book which abound in the seventeenth century and deal

[1] John Evelyn's translation: *Of Gardens.*

[2] Among the apologies for gardening we have a peculiarly ingenious one in the shape of a book by the Abbé de Vallemont, published at the end of the century: *Curiosités de la Nature et de l'Art sur la Végétation ou l'Agriculture et le Jardinage dans leur Perfection.* 1715. The writer urges men to perfect Agriculture and Gardening, as they have perfected the other arts. Gardens, he says, are the "délices des personnes curieuses, et de la plus haute condition." Flowers are to the earth what the stars are to the sky, and just as the stars are the flowers of the sky, so the flowers are the stars of the earth, etc., etc. The good Abbé explains that, if a book has the title of Flora, the author's speech must be flowery: "Il faut être fleuri en parlant des fleurs." But the writer's real defence of his subject lies in the fact that the most illustrious families of the Roman Republic descended from herdsmen, ploughmen and gardeners, and he gives as a parallel to the origin of the French word "maraîcher" the following etymologies:

Lentulus—lentilles, que sa famille semoit ordinairement.
Fabius—fèves.
Cicéron—poids chiches, que ses aïeux faisoient venir dans leurs jardins.
Hortensius—tiroit sa naissance de quelque jardinier.
Porcius—étoit fils de quelque gardeur de cochons.
Le Père d'*Ovinius* gardoit les moutons: *Bubuleus*, les boeufs; *Vitulus*, les veaux; *Caprilius*, les chèvres.

These etymologies, he states, come from Alexander ab Alexandro, who follows Pliny in the Natural History, Lib. XVIII, cap. 3. But, he adds, "un bel esprit d'au delà des monts ne lui passe pas ces étimologies-là."

exclusively with the art of gardening and the cultivation of natural things: those devoted specially to fruit-growing, and therefore almost entirely practical and of small importance in the study of the appreciation of Nature, those which are planned on more general lines and give the principles of gardening as a whole, which have a direct bearing on our subject, and those which have a literary aim and are meant for works of art as well as text-books. To these three kinds might be added a fourth, were it not so great as to be beyond the scope of a brief description, that is that vast category of seventeenth-century works, poetry and prose, wherein the writer has set himself to describe the famous gardens of his time or sometimes to add his little contribution to the subject by painting some real or imaginary garden nook which had specially appealed to him. These writers, like the more serious professors of the art, help to show how the mind of this age understood horticulture and to what extent it was widespread through France.

Another valuable source of information are the books on travel. The famous Diary of John Evelyn, for instance, provides us with entertaining and picturesque details about the gardens of Europe and in especial those of Italy and France, showing an interesting parallel between the pleasure gardens of the two countries in 1644. These are, of course, the *jardin-bibelot* type of garden, with their ingenious devices and tricks to deceive the senses of the unwary visitor, and the delicate, elaborate beauty which precedes the restrained simplicity of Le Nôtre. Another fertile source is the *Journey to Paris in* 1698, of Doctor Martin Lister. Here we have a particularly interesting glimpse

into the private gardens of Paris[1] and its surroundings, and the outspoken comments of the doctor reveal to us emphatically those features of French gardening which appear specially remarkable to the Englishman, and which we may therefore conclude to be different from the gardens at home. Many details of the management and cultivation of the garden catch Doctor Lister's observant eye. A solid protestant contempt for certain customs adds piquancy to this small volume, but in the main the writer maintains a note of impartial observation, varied with warm admiration for French art. Less literary, but more trenchant than the Diary of Evelyn, this work is an important contribution to gardening literature.

An additional fund of information can be obtained from the gardening almanacs of the time. Lister himself touches upon this subject in describing his visit to the *Pépinière* or Royal Nursery of Plants in the Faubourg Saint Honoré. M. Morley, the controller, showed him a written Almanack of flowering plants for the whole year, which he said was an Original; but, adds Lister, the same had existed for over thirty years in England, thanks to Mr. Evelyn. One wonders what was the precise nature of this Almanack. Certainly Lister was unflatteringly unimpressed, and it must be added that the majority of gardening manuals which we have mentioned above include in their information just such almânacs as we imagine Lister to be describing: lists of plants, trees, etc., for every

[1] The private gardens that Lister visited were the following:—

D' Aumont.	De Lorge.
Puissart.	Hôtel Pélitier.
Bouvilliers.	Hôtel Sullie.
Comartin.	Louvois.
Les Diguières.	Furnier.

month in the year and the appropriate labours connected with their preservation. Such calendars are really interesting in that they tell us what plants were most popular in French gardening, thereby giving a vivid touch to our pictured idea of these pleasances. Moreover, they acquaint us with a variety of old horticultural superstitions, a subject fascinating in itself.

There is evidence then of a great interest in the cultivation of gardens in this period, and we may naturally expect to find here the various manifestations of the appreciation of Nature which belong to the age. In no other activity can the quality show itself with such direct simplicity and the very number of the details which are treated in the manuals reveal the importance with which the writers regarded their art. A brief examination of these details will show the character of that appreciation; what value, for instance, was accorded to the sense of the picturesque as regards colour and form; to which of the senses and in what manner appeal was made, how far the delight in display and the exercise of power predominated, and to what extent the garden was expected to reveal and reflect the personality of man. In the main we shall find that the love of Nature that belongs to the seventeenth century has the same characteristics in the art of gardening, painting and letters. Colour is more valued than is generally believed, and makes up in vividness and force what it lacks in subtlety and range. Variety is important, but not the variety of colouring that belongs to an age which possesses a profoundly artistic sense; rather the changefulness that denotes a love of magnificence and display. The sense of colour

diminishes moreover as the years advance, giving place to the sense of form which becomes the keynote of artistic feeling and expression. Of the other senses sound alone makes much appeal; scent and taste are comparatively rare. Yet among the instances of sensation which distinguish literature and the practical arts we find curious contradictions: colour appealing more in one art than in another, scent appearing markedly important on one occasion and negligible on a second: taste[1] indulged by one writer as a source of poetry and ignored by the rest, etc.

The subordination of external to human nature is a characteristic of every form of art in this age. At times it shows itself in the introduction of the human element to give interest to the scene: the marble statue that gives a point to the garden arbour or grove, the shepherd who breaks the monotony in the valleys of L'Astrée, or the figure that relieves the landscapes of pictorial art. At other times the same spirit manifests itself in the desire to make of Nature an imitation of man and his works; trees and plants cut to suggest mechanical forms, or to ape the appearance of man himself, or of the animals which do him service. The domination of man over Nature is indeed one of the most striking characteristics of the age. One of the rarest qualities that exist is the idea of the freedom and independence of Nature. The pastoral dramatist cannot conceive of her as being anything but a stage for his actors; the gardener has always in mind the princely owner of his well-planned estates. Not only is the ruling spirit inherent in this generation of men:

[1] Taste is naturally considered by the writers of purely utilitarian gardening works, but with these we are not concerned.

the progress of scientific discovery increases the means by which they can gratify the taste for conquest over matter; Nature is becoming less and less an undiscovered quantity, whose properties are unknown. Two elements, it is true, still resist the power of man in these days: mountains and the sea; these are the forms of Nature that still maintain something of their independence therefore, but they are not on this account the source of poetic inspiration that they might be to a people less enamoured of the sense of power, they are the cause of indignant fear and irritated impatience.

Nowhere, perhaps, is this spirit of domination over Nature more apparent than in the manifestations of the *Précieux* art. To the inhabitants of the *salon* world, with their naturally exuberant energy and their adopted refinement, Nature is a toy whose chief merit lies in its capacity for the adornment of society. Whether it be in the groves and meadows that frame the Céladons and Astrées of court life, or the garland of flowers that poets hang round the neck of Madame de Rambouillet, or the quaint devices of mineral or animal growth that form the famous grotto of Versailles, this people takes external Nature as its amusement, wearing it as a jewel, or playing with it as a toy. The subsequent age, more serious and reflective, and less conscious of outward appearance, treats Nature in a graver manner, making her a scene for reflection and contemplation.

These qualities, then, which are more or less constant throughout the age, are revealed in gardening as well as in the other arts. A brief examination of the actual details of the practice of gardening will show what form they take in this particular branch.

For the serious lover the choice of site was the first important problem, and all our writers insist upon a wise selection as the first step towards a successful garden. They discuss climate, position, aspect and quality of soil with a wealth of detail into which we need not enter here. Naturally, where the owner's first care has not been the perfect development of certain natural surroundings, and when expense has been no object and the waste of time and labour no obstacle, as in the case of Versailles, then the choice of site has been regulated by other circumstances. Thus we have, in Versailles,[1] the very worst spot imaginable chosen for the construction of the park, all the natural features of the district combining to make the land barren,[2] damp and low, or, to quote Saint-Simon in 1715, " le plus triste et le plus ingrat de tous les lieux, sans vue, sans bois, sans eau, sans terre, parce que tout y est sable mouvant ou marécage."[3] But in this case those most essential features of the architectural type of garden, water, woods and breadth of view were at war with another and more powerful quality of seventeenth-century art: the love of the marvellous and the delight in the exercise of power, which led Louis XIV. to " tyrannize over Nature and subjugate her by means of art and wealth," making of what Saint-Simon disrespectfully calls a sewer,[4] a miracle of architectural and hydraulic art. But Boyceau, Rapin, La Quintinie and their like, having the true artist's joy in the use of

[1] *Vide* Barbet : *Les Grandes Eaux de Versailles*, 1907, and Nolhac : *Création de Versailles*, 1901, for accounts of the money and labour expended on the royal gardens.

[2] Saint-Simon : *Mémoires*, ed. " Grands Ecrivains," XXVIII, p. 166. Editor's note : Les arbres meurent assez vite à Versailles, etc.

[3] *Mémoires*, XXVII, p. 159.

[4] *Mémoires*, XXVII, p. 171. " Et je n'ai jamais compris qu'on ait pu . . . préférer ce cloaque à ce qu'est Saint-Germain."

the best material, press the would-be gardener to build only there where the land may repay him for his toil, and, in the ordering of his estate, construct his home so that he may have the best view of his self-made landscape.[1] Some indeed urge the necessity of being sheltered from evil neighbours and garrison towns,[2] thereby showing that the gardener in the age of Louis XIV. had more to fear than the elements, and that the assaults of man might be more disastrous than floods, winds or sun. Setting aside, therefore, such climatic conditions as height, shelter from winds, aspect, etc., which have no special bearing upon our subject, we note that one quality in the choice of site maintains its importance throughout the age, becoming increasingly necessary with the development of the art of Le Nôtre.[3] That is that wide prospect and distant view which enable the artist to satisfy his sense of form by the protraction of his parallel lines and the multiplication of his intersecting curves, so that in principle the whole garden, with every constituent part, may be visible to the beholder at one and the same time, and his imagination may be struck with the wonder of the work as a whole, while his eye, trained to appreciate the æsthetic value of straight lines and simple figures, may follow intelligently every movement of the artist's mind until it

[1] Estienne and Liébault: *L'Agriculture et la Maison Rustique*, 1572, Part I, Book 7.

[2] Estienne and Liébault: *L'Agriculture et la Maison Rustique*, 1572, Part I, Book 7.

[3] An interesting example of the importance of this quality exists in the dimensions of the Grand Canal at Versailles. The sides are not parallel, but sloped so as to counteract the effect of the perspective when the canal is viewed from the Terrace, the result being that the piece of water looks equally wide at the far end, and the effect of size is greatly increased. *Vide* Dézallier d'Argenville: *La Théorie et la Pratique du Jardinage*, Chapter II, on the subject of size: "Je ne trouve rien de plus divertissant."

loses itself among the alleys, groves and waterways, as they merge into the horizon.

In this sense we shall observe a similarity in the choice of site for garden and for pastoral play. The flat or slightly undulating landscape makes the strongest appeal, where the husbandman or shepherd can view from a distance the whole scene without impediment except in the form of such slight obstacles as serve to break the monotony, or divide the canvas into different planes. Likewise in the landscape painting of the time there is an apparent fondness for wide, open spaces. Mountains are relegated to the distance: their attraction lies solely in their outline on the horizon. At that point they have no power to inflict the unwelcome feeling of awe which their nearer presence inspires; moreover, when it is necessary, for the purposes of good composition in garden or painted scene, to have a limit to the view, the composer prefers to supply his own restraints in the form of fence or building or wood, with which he can more accurately determine the outlines of his form.

It is not our intention here to enter too far into the details of the construction of the most famous gardens of the age. But the material which the gardener uses, and the way in which he employs it, is of great interest in an examination of the feeling for nature, which expresses itself in the laying out of parks and private pleasure-grounds. We can do no better than imitate Rapin in observing first the flowers and showing to what extent the flower garden was used between 1600 and the end of the century.

The gardener frequently divided his flowers into two categories: those which were valued principally

for their scent, and those whose special appeal was their variety or richness of colour,[1] the favourite example of the first being the carnation, of which a large number of species were known[2] and which often obtained, in gardening manuals, a short treatise apart.[3] The second was often represented by the tulip, of which, says Lister, eighteen millions, including other bulbs, were sent to Marly in a space of four years' time. "Such a shew . . . in the broad Beds, of a 1,000 Paces long, everywhere, all this Garden over, in their full beauty, was a most surprising sight," and the enthusiasm thereat of the learned doctor earned for him the gracious attention of De Villeroy, who, says he, "afterwards detached himself to single me out, and very obligingly embraced me, and saluted me with a kiss."[4]

Sometimes these categories were subject to variation. The doctors Liébault and Estienne[5] recognize in their ideal garden two kinds of flowers, and divide their "parterres" into two equal parts. On the one side grow the scented flowers, on the other, those "dedicated to *bouquets*, coronets and wreaths," these last including violets, lilies of the valley, carnations, pansies, wall-flowers and lilies, besides half a dozen others. In general, however, a clear distinction seems to exist between the scented and the coloured flowers.

The first of these groups was specially popular. Practically all the manuals have a list of the scented

[1] Olivier de Serres: *Théâtre de l'Agriculture*, etc., etc. 1600. P. Morin: *Remarques Nécessaires pour la Culture des Fleurs*. 1678.
[2] La Quintinie's list includes between three and four hundred.
[3] *Vide* La Bruyère: *Les Caractères*, 1688, *De la Mode* on the tulip grower.
[4] *A Journey to Paris in the year* 1698.
[5] *La Maison Rustique*. L. II, Ch. XLVII.

flowers, which were used either to perfume the air in the gardens themselves, or for the purpose of strewing the floors of bedrooms and halls in spring and summer to give freshness to the atmosphere.[1] When we remember the declaration of Saint-Simon that the gardens of Trianon were so heavily scented with tuberoses that the Court was obliged to retreat indoors on summer evenings when they were in flower,[2] we realize vividly that the sense of smell was an important factor in the choice of the garden flower, and that the appeal of the " fleur odoriférente " was almost more potent than that of colour or form. Indeed, the evidence seems to be that the flower, as an individual form, was little considered in this age. Masses of colour, or design, were keenly appreciated, but the flower itself was a minute part of a large whole ; separately it existed very little, if at all. Thus it is found crowded in the garden-beds, or grouped in wreaths and garlands in the sculpture, painting or tapestry work of the day, but in no form of art does it appear single to any great extent ; it is rather as a mass than as a unit that it plays a part.

Among the scented flowers that adorn the gardens we can find the majority of herbs well known to us to-day : lavender, thyme, marjoram, rosemary, melilot, parsley, fennel and rue, hyssop and catnip, mint and basil and sage. The number of varieties varies from twenty to sixty, according to the imagination of the

[1] P. Morin : *Remarques Nécessaires pour la Culture des Fleurs.*

[2] *Mémoires* : 1702. X, 358. " Rien n'étoit si magnifique que ces soirées de Trianon : tous les parterres changeoient tous les jours de compartiments de fleurs, et j'ai vu le Roi et toute la cour les quitter à force de tubéreuses, dont l'odeur embaumoit l'air, mais étoit si forte par leur quantité, que personne ne put tenir dans le jardin, quoique très vaste et en terrasse sur un bras du canal."

gardener and the scope of his garden, nor do they always include nothing but the medicinal or the flavouring herbs. La Quintinie gives a list of over thirty scented flowering plants, which he recommends for garden use, from cyclamen to violets. Here we find not the medicinal herbs suggested above, but honeysuckle, hyacinth, jessamine, narcissus and syringa, a medley of flowers and flowering shrubs which have no useful properties to add value to their lustre, only their scent and their decorative qualities.

Of the scentless flowers, that is, those specially distinguished by their colour, the gardeners' lists give a great variety. The great gardens of Paris had beds planted with bulbs of every description, just as we find them in the Tuileries to-day. Indeed, Lister notes that the Royal Nursery was in the habit of sending fortnightly batches of flower pots to Trianon, averaging 92,000 pots during the summer.[1] Naturally Lister makes no mention of the summer or late spring flowers. He made the journey in March, and, indeed, complains on one occasion that the " Season of the year did not much favour his curiosity " in the matter of outdoor sight-seeing. But from La Quintinie and others we have detailed information about the different flowers which adorn the summer beds ; indeed, the former devotes three pages and a half to his extensive list. In addition he gives a paragraph or so to some fifty different plants: herbaceous plants, bulbs and flowering shrubs, and a special brief discourse on the narcissus,

[1] Of the many flowers that he notes in the *Journey to Paris*, the most frequently recurring are the tulip, whose popularity is borne out by the manuals of the time, the ranunculus, known in many different colours, both striped and plain, the anemone, the stock-gilly flower, the crocus and the daffodil. In the garden of M. Furnier in Paris he finds nothing " so pompous as double red and stript stockes."

iris, hyacinth, auricula, anemone, carnation and tulip,[1] from which fact we may infer that all these kinds were popular. A considerable number of writers comment also on the beauty and magnificence of the Crown Imperial lily,[2] which is included in La Quintinie's list.[3]

It is not surprising to find that the list of flowers valued on account of their colour is large. An examination of the poetry of the age shows that the sense of colour is by no means deficient in the first half of the century, and that it begins to wane with the development of the classic ideal. There is a preference for simple, if not crude, colours, and it is evident that in the latter part of the age variety was an essential quality in colouring, at least in the royal gardens, if Saint-Simon[4] be correct in his assertion. There is not, however, in literature a parallel to the sense of smell, which obviously here has a large share in the attractions of the garden, but that is hardly surprising, considering that this sense finds very little expression in French literature before the Parnassiens. Saint-Amant is the only writer of the time to whom this sensation becomes a source of poetry.

[1] P. Morin also gives a treatise on Carnations and additional catalogues for anemones, ranunculi, tulips and irises.

[2] Rapin praises the beauty of the Crown Imperial and notes with regret that it has no smell.

[3] We append the list of flowers to which La Quintinie devotes special attention :—

Anemones.	Gans.	Lys-Flamme.
Catilinettes.	Genêt blanc.	Marguerites.
Clochettes.	Giroflée.	Martagons.
Col de Chameau.	Gigantine.	Mollet d'Inde.
Consoude Royale.	Jacinthes.	Mousse Grecque.
Cornette.	Jasmin.	Muguet.
Couronne Impériale.	Jonquilles.	Myrthe double.
Cyclamen.	Iris.	Narcisse.
Dictame.	Laurier d'Inde.	Oeillets.
Éternelle.	Lylas.	Tulipes.
Fritière.	Lys.	Violette.

[4] *Vide* page 24, Note 2.

The method of planting and arrangement was, of course, widely different from that of the English garden of the present day. The modern herbaceous border was practically unknown. Flowers were massed together according to their kind, and the different species were usually kept apart. Lister comments on the garden D'Aumont in Paris, which contained wonderful " parterres of flowers, each sort by themselves."[1] Some flowers, La Quintinie insists, must be kept separate, on account of their harmful effects upon each other. In other cases he suggests the mingling of bulbs, tulips and anemones, for instance, round the beds and within the borders.

The method of arrangement was, of course, the geometrical design in what was known as " broderie." The bed was planted either with evergreen shrubs, or with flowering plants, or sometimes with the two mixed together; the whole made a geometrical pattern which varied from the simplest of forms to the most intricate construction of intersecting circles and straight lines. As Dézallier d'Argenville says in speaking of the gardener's qualifications, " Il faut être un peu Géomètre, sçavoir l'Architecture et la bien dessiner . . ." Sometimes the design took the form of symbolic and heraldic figures,[2] such as the lion rampant, the fleurs de

[1] O. de Serres gives a separate list of herbs suitable for the parterre with compartments, and flowers for what he calls the " Jardin Bouquetier." These would frequently be planted by themselves: Carnations, violas, lilies of the valley, March violets, pansies, marguerites, heliotrope, lilies, iris, peonies, anemones, Crown Imperial, etc.

[2] J. Boyceau: *Traité du Jardinage*, 1638, Ch. V. " Des Parterres . . . façonnés . . . de compartiments, feuillages, passements, moresques, arabesques, grotesques, guillochis, rosettes, gloires, targes, écussons d'armes, chiffres, et devises."

Olivier de Serres also speaks of " les herbes parlant lettres, devises, chiffres, armoiries, cadrans, les gestes des hommes et des bêtes, la disposition des navires, bateaux et autres choses contrefaites en herbes et arbustes, avec merveilleuses patience et industrie."

lis or the true lover's knot; sometimes it was a portrait of bird, beast, or even man, in which case evergreens, rather than flowers, were used. D'Argenville gives a special plate " d'un goût très-nouveau "[1] of an arrangement of " plate-bandes " with two dolphins' heads at one end and the face of a griffon at the other, the latter ornamented with bats' wings and bib or cravat of grass, the eyes, eyebrows, whiskers and plume of " broderie," that is, an evergreen trimmed to the exact shape. The ground between was strewn with sand of varying colours, in order to bring out more clearly the design.

The form of the parterres or beds was too varied to be described in detail.[2] They were frequently surrounded by other beds which served as a border, these being ridge-shaped, not flat, like the parterres themselves, and containing either flowers, shrubs, clipped trees and strips of grass surrounded by paths or simply rows of shrubs in pots, or tubs of flowers. The trees planted in the parterres were low in stature and rigorously clipped, so that the size in no way obstructed

[1] 1711.

[2] Estienne and Liébault distinguish between, first, " Compartiment Simple " and " Compartiment avec Bordure," in which the design consists of intersecting curves and straight lines, formed of evergreens, and second, the system of " Carreaux Rompus " when the background of geometrical figures is formed by the plants, and the design by the sand-strewn pathways lying between. D'Argenville describes four species of parterre: (1) *à Broderie*, first introduced into France by Claude Mollet at the end of the sixteenth century, and remaining in 1711 the most popular of all, sometimes varied with clumps of shrubs and strips of grass against a background of sand; (2) *à Compartiment*, more complicated than the former because the design is repeated and there may be the addition of strips of grass or flowers; (3) *à l'Anglaise*, a carpet of grass either plain or only slightly broken and surrounded, by flowers like the *Parterre des Fleurs* at Versailles (*vide* Félibien: *Description de Versailles*, p. 230); (4) the parterre " de pièces coupées," which he declares old-fashioned, the parts symmetrically cut with no lawn or " broderie," but only plate-bandes of flowers bordered with box. Of these four the " broderie " beds should be planted nearest to the buildings, so that the near view of the occupants should be over the finest.

the view of the whole bed and, moreover, the whole garden.[1]

It is a little difficult to be sure of the particular kind of flower or shrub that was generally used for the " compartiments " and borders, since the different gardeners vary somewhat in their advice on this point. The " broderie " was usually constructed of box[2] or of some other small evergreen which lent itself to close clipping and trimming, while the " compartiments " and the squares contained any of the well-known herbs.[3] The borders were either of box, or, if the owner of the garden disliked the smell,[4] of some other and sweeter plant, such as lavender or rosemary, myrtle, thyme, alpine pinks, or any other herb that seemed suitable in growth. For the general purposes for which flowers were used we may again quote Rapin, who, besides their beauty as an ornament to the garden, cites the decoration which they may supply in rooms and on tables.[5] They also provide perfumes and unguents, food for the bees and medicines for mankind, and, finally, models for the painter—this last reason being an interesting example of the way in which the classical

[1] D'Argenville gives us a specimen design of the *parterre à l'Anglaise*. It consists in the middle of a symmetrical arrangement of rectangular figures (with rounded corners) of lawn, the group being roughly oblong in shape and having at the ends two fleur de lis. The figures intersect and are surrounded by gravelled paths, the whole having a narrow border of straight plate-bandes of flowers and clipped yews, interrupted by six circular beds of the same kind and once more intersected by gravelled paths.

[2] *Cf.* Rapin, who recommends brick borders for small gardens :

> This rule for larger Gardens was not meant,
> Where Box is thought the chiefest ornament.
> And how so e're you cultivate a place ;
> If it wants Box, you take away its grace.—*Of Gardens*, Bk. I.

[3] Such as marjoram, camomile, basil, rue, rosemary, hyssop, thyme, wormwood, parsley and sage, or marguerites, March violets and lavender.

[4] This seems often to have been the case. O. de Serres and Estienne and Liébault all remark upon its unpleasant smell.

[5] *Of Gardens*, Bk. I.

mind sometimes appreciates art before Nature. There is more than one curious example of this quality at the time—an appreciation of Nature, that is expressed, not directly, but preferably through the medium of some other art; thus flowers find their justification in this case by the material that they offer to the painter's art; the song of birds is reproduced in the grottos by mechanical devices, and thus Auvray in his poetry describes the painting of a landscape instead of the landscape itself. The taste is not universal, but it is not uncommon, and would repay a detailed study.

M. Charlanne in his examination of the connection between French and English gardens in the seventeenth century supplies us with two interesting examples of the appreciation of flowers. Henrietta Maria, wife of Charles I., was passionately fond of flowers, and, missing them in the gardens of Wimbledon, sent to her mother in France for a large collection of flowers and fruit-trees, which she afterwards naturalized. In the Calendar of State Papers of 1661–1662 we still have the list of flowers which Gabriel Mollet bought in Paris for Charles II., containing a great number of anemones and ranunculi,[1] and a dozen big double hyacinth bulbs with a dozen of yellow jonquils.[2] It is a point of no small interest that the French princess was unable to satisfy her love of flowers at the English court. These two incidents, though they in no way prove that the flower garden was more popular in France than in England, certainly suggest that Paris was a recognized centre for the purchase of flowers.

The flower-bed, then, though not the most important

[1] State Papers, Ch. II, vol. XLVII, f. 77. B.M.

[2] These examples are quoted in *L'Influence Française en Angleterre au XVIIe siècle.* 1906 p. 113–115.

feature of the seventeenth-century garden, formed a considerable part of the decoration of that time. We have ample evidence of its importance at Versailles and the other royal residences from a large body of witnesses, while travellers record the flowers of the private gardens in Paris. At Rueil, Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin sings of the beauties of the parterres with their flowers, " ces doux astres de la terre."[1] We know also that flowers as a feature of gardening began to disappear with the development of the work of Le Nôtre, who, Saint-Simon[2] tells us, was wont to say that the parterres were only for the nurses, who would admire them from the second story. " Il y excelloit néanmoins comme dans toutes les parties des jardins, mais il n'en faisoit aucune estime, et il avoit raison, car c'est où on ne se promène jamais." With the growth of the architectural style of gardening the decorative value of the flower declines.

In close connection with floral decoration and the geometrical designs of this age was the cultivation of the lawn. As has already been seen, the parterre, especially the *parterre à l'anglaise*, was often formed of a combination of flower-border and grass. In addition, the lawn was used then, as it is now, as a means of decoration in itself, and in French gardens the plots of grass were specially well adapted to the geometrical scheme as a whole, since with comparatively little effort the shape of the whole figure could be kept, and the outward appearance maintained with very much less renewing than that of a figure formed of flowers or shrubs. The lawn provided a pleasant variety when

[1] Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin : 1653. *Les Promenades de Richelieu; Troisième Promenade.*

[2] *Mémoires* : VII, p. 194.

an open space was needed, or when an unbroken extent of gravel or sand between two rows of trees, or round a fountain, would have created a monotonous effect and spoiled the proportions of the garden as a whole. These patches of turf were used for roadways between hedges of trees, for the " tapis vert " at Versailles, for the flooring of the various " bosquets " and groves, for platforms or steps leading to some raised part of the grounds, as for instance in the description of the gardens of Clamart, near Meudon, in La Fontaine's letter to his wife,[1] or for seats in outdoor theatres, which were so prominent a feature in the entertainments of Versailles. Where turf was used for the centre-piece of a " bosquet " care was taken to avoid monotony of form ; if, for example, the grass in the middle were octagonal in shape, the surrounding trees would be planted in a ring, thus preserving symmetry without monotony. The " Boulingrin " was different in essence from the English bowling-green, and was a common type of *bosquet*. " It comes from the English," says Dézallier d'Argenville, " but is quite different from it ; . . . it is always built in a hollow and covered with turf."[2] Frequently it held a clipped tree, or statue, as its central ornament.

The upkeep of these lawns was naturally a matter of more time and labour than it is to-day, nor were the French lawns so well kept as those in England. Lister, complaining of the mud in bad weather in the Tuileries, says that the grass-plots are ill-kept.[3] " They clip

[1] Correspondence : *Relation d'un Voyage de Paris à Limousin*. " Elle (the avenue) est à présent bordée d'un amphithéâtre de gazons, et a le fond relevé de huit ou dix marches . . ."

[2] *La Théorie et la Pratique du Jardinage*. 1711. Ch. VII.

[3] *Journey to Paris in* 1698.

them," he says, "and beat them with flat Beaters as they do their Walks. This puts me in mind of what I saw in the Garden of the Prince of Condé in Paris; where there was a Grassy Circle of about four feet wide, round one of the Fountains in the middle of the Garden; to keep this down, and make of it a finer Turf, the Gardner had Teathered two Black Lambs, and two White Kids, at equal distances, which fed upon it. Whatever the effect was, I thought it lookt pretty enough ; and the little Animals were as Ornamental, as the Grass." Lister is wrong, however, when he declares that there is no such thing as a roller used. Dézallier d'Argenville prescribes rolling with wooden or stone cylinders and cutting often in the English manner. Needless to say, the mechanical mower was unknown at this time[1], and scythes or hand sickles were used. But then, as now, the French garden suffered under a disadvantage : the greater heat of summer made it difficult to preserve the grass if it were cropped as close as our milder climate allows.

Of all the ornaments of a garden the seventeenth century lays perhaps most store by its trees, and this fact is the more readily realized when we compare the literature with the practical arts of the time. Though it is evident that there is appreciation of the flower for its colour and variety, it has not achieved in this epoch the importance that it gains later. On the other hand, trees figure largely in gardening, painting, poetry and prose. They form an essential part of the background of the pastoral drama, and appear in masses, rather than singly, in descriptive poetry. The nearest approach

[1] It was actually first patented in England in 1830 by Mr. Budding, and was manufactured in 1832 by Ransomes, of Ipswich.

to the conception of a personal relation between man and Nature is revealed in his attitude towards the tree ; in a few cases even he seems to invest it with a personality and a capacity for suffering.

There is ample evidence to prove that trees were loved for their own sake, though it was in most cases as a constituent part of the whole rather than as an individual thing. As an integral part in the design of avenues, terraces, balustrades and arbours, the tree is of equal importance with the sculptured stonework, and in many cases serves the same purpose, namely, the formation of a design destined to limit or enclose the view from the buildings. Even the purely ornamental trees, such as myrtle, the orange and the lemon, were very rarely planted singly, but stood ranged in straight rows or curved lines in the orangery or flower gardens. Where a tree was planted alone, it usually stood in the middle of some parterre or lawn, not as an object of beauty in itself, but rather as the central point of the figure as a whole.

Four main groups seem to include the different kinds of trees cultivated in the gardens of this time : (1) the forest trees which peopled the " bois de haute futaie " or lined the main avenues and walks, (2) the fruit trees, cultivated solely for their produce, (3) the trees which were suitable for planting in the parterre to break the monotony of the background, and (4) the fashionable, ornamental trees of the period, the myrtle, lemon, fig or orange, which generally occupied a place of their own in the orangery or elsewhere. In addition, the different manuals distinguish between the tree suitable for palisades and that fit for the formation of arbours or treillage work, etc., etc.

The *bois de haute futaie* was a special section of the garden set apart for the larger forest trees and serving two main purposes. Its position was usually furthest from the house, the *bosquets* and parterres lying between the buildings and these groves. It, therefore, formed the background of the whole scene, or rather the middle distance, since the architect, as we have already said, made a point of terminating his perspective by the distant horizon. Planted on either side of the main avenue, one may easily see how the *bois de haute futaie* made a graceful and solid background for the lighter relief-work, as Boyceau[1] calls it in his treatise, the arbours and cabinets of leaves which were the foreground of the design. Moreover, in many cases, the forest grove shut out the view of the neighbouring villages, thus extending the prospect for the imagination, though limiting it for the eye, the distant glimpse of the open country increasing the idea of size which was an important feature in the art of this time. Thus St. Cloud within its compass of twelve or fifteen miles held natural woods, cut into alleys[2] of varying sizes, Versailles surrounded the Grand Canal with groves of hornbeam, and Marly was built in the midst of wooded hills. As a rule, these groves were intersected by a number of avenues, symmetrically arranged, and they formed a geometrical figure by themselves; they were closely connected with the main avenues and usually it was possible, as in Versailles, to see from the heart of one to that of the next, so that no sensation of cramping resulted in the beholder's mind.

The second purpose of the forest grove was the

[1] Boyceau: *Traité du Jardinage*, 1638. Ch. VI. Du Relief.
[2] M. Lister: *Journey to Paris in* 1698.

provision of shaded walks and rides for the occupants of the garden. This quality was shared between the groves and the *bosquets* to which their Majesties repaired in 1678, says Félibien,[1] "to seek the fresh air, where the thickness of the trees prevents the sun's rays from penetrating . . ." But the *bois de haute futaie* had an intrinsic quality that was lacking in the more carefully cultivated *bosquets*. It had just that touch of rustic simplicity which the seventeenth-century landowner liked to develop in some part of his garden, perhaps with a view to increasing by contrast the studied elegance of the rest, and recalls the contrast of the shepherd background with the aristocratic demeanour and speech of the characters in the pastoral drama. The mind, moreover, indulges more easily in meditation where the eye is not distracted by the distant prospect, and where the thoughts are not scattered by the breeze from the open, and the courtier,[2] should he be in search of solitude, could find it more readily in these glades than in the more populous and artificial parts. Messieurs Estienne and Liébault[3] indeed mention six good reasons in defence of the "bois sauvages," namely, that the divers shades of green are pleasing to the eye, that they are full of singing birds, that much amusement is afforded by watching the flight of the birds or by catching them in traps, that they contain small game which is interesting to see and good to eat, that they provide shade in hot weather, and, lastly, that they give shelter for winter, where you can be "en ce lieu solitaire où vous

[1] Félibien: *Fête de Versailles, en* 1678.
[2] *Cf.* Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin in the *Sixième Promenade. De la Patience. Promenades de Richelieu.*
[3] *La Maison Rustique.* Ch. XIII.

pouvés vacquer à lire, écrire, et penser à vos afaires sans être distrait, ni jetter votre vue aux lieux éloignés . . ."

The manuals of the time furnish us with long lists of the trees suitable for these groves. These catalogues include the majority of well-known Northern European forest trees as well as four evergreens, the pine, the holm-oak, the yew and the fir. P. Morin[1] also names the American Acacia, the Spanish Chestnut and the Judas Tree. In the main the list of those recommended for the larger groves is the same as of those destined for the alleys and avenues; in the first case, however, the general preference seems to be for the oak, hornbeam, elm, beech, lime and ash. A prejudice against the maple is expressed by not a few. Dézallier d'Argenville declares it less fine than the beech or hornbeam, and other critics complain of its want of symmetry. One concludes that its form is too rugged for the taste of the age.

Besides the *bois de haute futaie* the French garden had also its inevitable orangery, which, for ornamental and social purposes, was one of the greatest sources of pleasure of the times. The Orangery at Versailles, built by Mansart and laid out by Le Nôtre, is too well known to need much description. Six hundred of

[1] *Remarques Nécessaires pour la Culture des Fleurs.* Paris, 1678. Morin gives the following list:—

Acacia de l'Amérique.	Cornouïller.	Peuplier.
Alizier.	Erables.	Pins.
Arbor Judæ.	Fresne.	Plane.
Aune.	Hestre.	Sapin.
Bouleau.	If.	Sorbier.
Charme.	Liége.	Sicomore.
Chastaigniers.	Mélèze.	Tilleul.
Chastaigniers de Cheval.	Meurier.	Tremble.
Chesnes.	Noyers.	Yeuse.
Cormier.	Ormes.	Ypreau.

these beautiful plants had been collected by Le Nôtre to stock the garden with the King's favourite tree ; the result was a strange and magnificent combination of architectural and horticultural art. Naturally the plants had to be protected during the winter months by the handsome structure erected behind the parterres; in the summer, then as now, they were carried out in their wooden cases to complete the designs of the parterres. In some instances the Orangery was erected inside the house, as, for instance, in the garden Puissart, where Lister tells us that "the *Orangery* . . . was the most beautiful Room, for the bigness, I had seen, paved with Marble and neatly wainscotted with Oak, from the top to the bottom, after our English manner." He adds that in summer, when cleared of trees, the room would no doubt serve for a dining-room. Sometimes the Orangery was not devoted to orange-trees alone. Lemons, myrtles, figs, oleanders, even laurustinus, were kept there, and other ornamental trees, especially those which were susceptible to a cold climate. In Versailles fig trees were stocked in the Potager, where Lister noted 700 cases, commenting on the fact that these trees are immensely popular in France. It is from the same writer that we learn that the *Pépinière* in the Faubourg Saint Honoré was the infirmary for orange-trees, which were sent there as they arrived from Genoa by sea, and brought out into the open air about the middle of May. From time to time, also, the owners of these delicate trees would despatch their plants to the Paris nursery, where they might be revived and restored to health. Nor was this frailty accounted a fault; it was a challenge to the pride of the owner. At sight of this profusion of myrtles, oranges and

laurels, the visitor could exclaim, like La Fontaine in the *Amours de Psyché*:[1]

> "Sommes-nous, dit-il, en Provence ?
> Quel amas d'arbres toujours verts
> Triomphe ici de l'inclémence
> Des aquilons et des hivers" ?

The *Dictionnaire Historique*[2] praises both the symmetry of these trees arranged like a "forêt encaissée," and their scent: "l'odorat n'est pas moins satisfait du parfum qu'ils répandent lorsqu'ils sont en fleurs: c'est une promenade délicieuse."

The alleys and avenues were one of the most important features of the garden. These were usually of two kinds, the open avenue, which is found in all the parks of the time, and the closed or covered pathway. The wide avenues might be single, double or even treble, like the famous middle avenue of the Tuileries Gardens which so won the heart of Lister on his journey to Paris ; they were planted accordingly with double, treble or quadruple rows of trees.[3] For the covered way naturally such trees were chosen as would grow into the required arches.[4] In some cases, especially in the smaller private gardens, not rows of trees but

[1] Ed. "Grands Ecrivains," vol. 8, p. 29.

[2] P. 800. Quoted in Note 6 on p. 28 of *Les Amours de Psyché*.

[3] Here the Spanish chestnut was frequently used, and the horse chestnut or the acacia, especially in the gardens of Paris itself ; in the outlying parks those forest trees were planted whose growth was not too bulky for the purpose. Here the poplar and the aspen found a place, and also most of the commoner fruit-trees, such as the apple, pear, cherry and plum. The growth of the cypress, too, adapted it well to this purpose. The favourites seem to have been the acacia, chestnut, walnut, cypress and elm.

[4] Morin gives the following list of suitable trees: Acacia de l'Amérique, Châtaignier de Cheval, Noyers, Ormes, Sicomore, Tilleul, Ypreau.

palisades lined these avenues.[1] They were rigidly clipped to form a hedge of great height and moderate thickness, and trimmed with such precision that their original form was completely disguised, as in the famous hornbeam hedges of Versailles.

Somewhat akin to the palisades was the treillage which served sometimes to line the avenues, but more often to bound the garden and exclude the view of neighbouring houses. This lattice was made of wood or iron, generally painted green, or green and gold; sometimes it was unadorned, at others it supported suitable decorative plants. In some cases it was wrought into ornamental shapes—arches, vases and the like, and there is no doubt that it was popular in Paris at the end of the century, since Lister[2] admires the treillage of no less than eight different private gardens, commending specially a small one at Les Diguières, all of iron leaves painted green, the only one of the kind. The flat surface of these fences was broken by trees, planted in cases or pots, at equal distances along the line.

In size the avenues might range from five or six to thirty feet in width,[3] the general principle being that the covered pathways were narrower than the open ones, partly because the tree-arches were then narrow in

[1] These were formed of forest trees whose growth was sufficiently substantial as to require no prop, such as the hornbeam, the maple, the laurel, the evergreen oak, etc. Sometimes, however, a less sturdy tree was used, such as the privet, syringa, guelder rose or box ; in which case the palisade was lower and wooden supports were set in the ground. In these lower hedges, which sometimes flanked the tall ones, forming a double row, Morin recommends the mixing of fruit-tree with fruit-tree to provide variety, and evergreen with evergreen.

[2] In his description of St. Cloud he mentions the infructiferous greens which were fastened to the Treillage "which are the linings of most Walls here." *Journey to Paris in* 1698.

[3] The *Allée d'Ormes* of the Tuileries was about 30 ft. across.

extent and therefore easier to grow, partly because the rigid sense of proportion dictated these dimensions. In addition, and for the same reason, the width of the avenue was always determined by the height of the palisade.

The *bosquets*[1] are a curious and interesting example of the use to which this generation put its trees. Boyceau mentioned these under the name of " corps relevez " in which he includes arbours (berceaux), archways, halls, rooms, cabinets, etc., made either of stonework or of wood covered with leaves. To these he adds the fountains, marble groups, balustrades, and platforms, everything, in short, that is not the mere background of the garden, but extraneous ornament. These he recognizes as a kind of rustic architecture which forms a most important part of the great whole, both for spectacular reasons and for purposes of practical use, as, for instance, the *salle de théâtre* of Versailles.

The interior was often an open space of grass or gravel, or, as we have said, a " boulingrin " containing one or more trees or statues, or, frequently, a fountain. The frame was a wall of foliage.[2] This hedge might be evenly clipped to resemble an ordinary wall, or it might be cut into shapes to afford a certain amount of variety, with the upper edge festooned or shaped into cases, pyramids, etc. At the beginning of the age the *bosquet* wall attains an elaborate form which it rarely shows in the time of Le Nôtre, when simplicity of outline is the

[1] Dézallier d'Argenville says " Les bosquets font le capital d'un jardin."

[2] Cypress, rose, box (when not avoided on account of the smell), juniper, laurel, yew and various southern fruit-trees, such as fig, lemon, olive, orange and others.

object of the gardener's art and Dézallier d'Argenville[1] denounces " des petits cabinets et retours, des bassinets et des allées si étroites qu'à peine deux personnes s'y peuvent promener de front," as faulty in taste. The walls of the arbours were sometimes formed of treillage, covered with plants.

The number of *bosquets* varies in proportion to the size of the garden; in a simple plan for a garden of five or six acres Dézallier d'Argenville places two, one on either side of the main avenue, separating the flower and kitchen gardens from the *bois de haute futaie*. These were a *Salle Verte* with *boulingrin* and a *cloître, formé de berceaux naturels*. In Versailles, which covers a very large area, there are twenty. In all cases symmetry was carefully preserved, but relieved by a certain judicious variety of form. Two *bosquets*, for instance, that matched each other in the general design, differed within in details of shape and form, the craftsman mating thereby the sense of proportion and symmetry with the artist's wholesome dislike of the mechanically accurate, so that the little-studied irregularities in the construction of these ornaments were like the hand-done work of the carver or painter and had the same human finish. Too much has been said about the mechanical regularity of Versailles and of the French garden of this age, and our misconceptions of to-day are largely based upon the misunderstandings of the early nineteenth century, which mistook geometrical design for dullness and an ordered symmetry for the accuracy of a machine. These artists and craftsmen of Nature worked upon a given convention, just as the landscape gardeners of the eighteenth century

[1] *La Théorie et la Pratique du Jardinage*, Ch. III.

worked, and as we work to-day, be it only the convention of liberty, and their freedom of expression in the details of the design bears witness to their sense of fitness and their understanding of the principles of art.

Among the most common type of *bosquet* of the early seventeenth century the labyrinth or dædalus should be named. The popularity of this grove is due to a special quality in the art of gardening and the appreciation of Nature, namely that delight in the marvellous and the mysterious which is a characteristic of the time. Every self-respecting park from Versailles[1] downwards had its maze, a labyrinth in which the court might play its elegant and dignified hide-and-seek and admire the numerous statues or fountains which every turn of the winding path revealed.[2] The walls of the labyrinth were formed of any close-growing evergreen, such as cypress[3] or yew, and the design of the interior varied in intricacy according to the size.

A peculiarly interesting aspect of the cultivation of trees was the topiary work, which formed a special branch of gardening. This art,[4] which was at its height in the early days of the seventeenth century, seems to have declined under the rule of Le Nôtre, or at any rate to have adopted a much simpler form. In the grounds of Versailles the yews, which have now attained such large dimensions on the terraces and around the *Bassin de Latone*, were, in the days of Le

[1] The labyrinth of Versailles was destroyed in 1775.

[2] For examples, the statues representing the Fables of Æsop in the labyrinth at Versailles.

[3] The maze at the Tuileries was of cypress.

[4] In France it owed its origin to Italian influence, where it was an art of long standing, much practised by the ancient Romans. *Cf.* Pliny the Younger, Ep. V.

Nôtre, restricted in growth, by the deliberate choice of the artist, so that they might form a series of decorative shapes, but not impede the view of the distant avenues and groves. Nor were they cut into many different fantastic shapes, the taste for forcing Nature thus crudely to imitate art being no part of the principles of Le Nôtre. But in the early years of the century, and largely owing to the Italian influence in France, these trees cut into strange designs were a popular feature of a gentleman's garden, and just as in the parterres we find flat designs in evergreens of "griffon"[1] and dolphin, fleur de lis and lion, so here we see innumerable shapes of beast and bird and even whole scenes enacted in holly, privet, laurel, yew or box. Privet indeed seems to be universally recommended by the manuals for topiary work, its hardiness, its sturdy growth and its small leaf making it specially suitable, and its fine, white flower and sweet scent lending an added attraction.

At the end of the age, when Versailles was declining in popularity and the principles of Le Nôtre falling into disrepute, there was a reaction in France and England in favour of the earlier complexity of style and the influence of Holland takes the place of that of the architect of Versailles.[2] There is then an increase in the popularity of the clipped tree, so much so that in 1713 *The Guardian*[3] publishes a satirical article on the

[1] The griffon was a popular dog in France at this time. *Vide* the article in Larousse on this subject: "Connus depuis longtemps en France, et plusieurs de nos rois ont eu pour ces chiens une affection toute particulière. Henri IV en perdit le sien au milieu de la guerre civile en 1596 et en fut fort préoccupé." They were used extensively for partridge shooting.

[2] L. Charlanne: *L'Influence française en Angleterre au XVIIe siècle*. Paris, 1906, p. 118.

[3] *The Guardian*, Sept. 29, 1713.

subject, complaining of the various "Tonsures of Greens into the most regular and formal shapes" and even of "monstrous Attempts beyond the reach of the Art itself." "We run into sculpture," says the editor, "and are yet better pleased to have our Trees in the most awkward Figures of Men and Animals than in the most regular of their own . . I know an eminent Cook, who beautified his County Seat with a Coronation Dinner in Greens, where you see the Champion flourishing on Horseback at the end of the Table, and the Queen in perpetual Youth at the other." The article recommends, with some humour, a collection of second-hand "greens" to be disposed of by an eminent town-gardener, who "cut Family Pieces of Men, Women or Children. Any ladies that please may have their own Effigies in Myrtle or their Husbands in Hornbeam. He is a Puritan Wag," continues *The Guardian*, with amusing solemnity, "and never fails, when he shows his Garden, to repeat that Passage in the Psalms, Thy wife shall be as the Fruitful Vine, and thy Children as Olive Branches round thy Table . . ." The list of trees for sale is as follows :

"*Adam* and *Eve* in Yew ; *Adam* a little shatter'd by the Fall of the Tree of Knowledge in the great Storm ; *Eve* and the Serpent very flourishing.

"The Tower of *Babel*, not yet finished.

"*St. George* in Box ; his Arm scarce long enough, but will be in condition to stick the Dragon next *April*.

"A *green Dragon* of the same, with a Tail of Ground Ivy for the present.

"N.B. *These two not to be sold separately.*

"*Edward* the *Black Prince* in Cypress.

"A *Laurustine* Bear in Blossom, with a Juniper Hunter in Berries.

"A Pair of Giants, *stunted*, to be sold cheap.

"A Queen *Elizabeth* in Phylirea (privet) a little inclining to the Green Sickness, but of full growth.

"A Queen *Elizabeth* in Myrtle, which was very forward, but miscarried by being too near a Savine.

"An old Maid of Honour in Wormwood.

"A topping *Ben Johnson* in Laurel.

"Divers eminent Modern Poets in Bays, somewhat blighted, to be disposed of a Pennyworth.

"A Quickset Hog shot up into a Porcupine, by its being forgot a Week in rainy Weather.

"A Lavender Pigg with Sage growing in his Belly.

"*Noah's Ark* in Holly, standing on the Mount, the Ribs a little damaged for want of Water.

"A Pair of *Maidenheads* in Firr, in great forwardness."

The mocking note of this article suggests that the tide has once more turned in favour of a greater simplicity, and that the severity of the style of Le Nôtre is winning back the general favour.

Of the importance of water in the decorative scheme of the seventeenth century so much has already been said that it is unnecessary to insist upon the details here. The use of water in the construction and composition of a design comes to France from Italy and proceeds from the imitation of the wonderful water avenues of the Villa d'Este and other places of the kind. It is in water that the seventeenth-century artist has developed most fully his taste for experimenting with the powers of Nature and testing his

ability to use her to fulfil his conception of art. It is through water also that he comes into a more personal contact with Nature, showing for this element the same intimate affection that he feels for trees. The fondness of D'Urfé for his native Lignon and its attendant streams, with his personification of the rivers in the form of bearded giants, is paralleled by the great figures of the main streams and tributaries that surround the *Parterres d'Eau* at Versailles and the same spirit, though not the same personification, is present in a great number of lyrics and pastoral plays. Water, like trees, forms an essential part of the landscape of his age.

It may appear in a great variety of forms ; as a level plane, whose outline and surface alone contribute to the harmony of the design, as in the *Parterres d'Eau* and the Grand Canal of Versailles, or as an everchanging three-dimensional figure whose charm lies partly in outline and partly in its varying colour, light and form, as in the fountains of innumerable gardens of the period, or again as a mass imitative of some object in Nature or art, as the *Arbre d'Eau*, the *Théâtre d'Eau*, and the *Fontaine de la Pyramide* at Versailles. Or it may be used in a less tutored form, in running streams or natural waterfalls, such as those advocated by Boyceau,[1] who prefers small streams to big canals.

[1] *Traité du Jardinage*, Ch. VII. *Cf.* La Fontaine in the song of Hortésie (the muse of Gardening) in *Le Songe de Vaux* (Ed. : Grands Écrivains, p. 259).

" Je donne au liquide cristal
Plus de cent formes differentes,
Et le mets tantôt en canal,
Tantôt en beautés jaillissantes ;
On le voit souvent par degrés
Tomber à flots précipités ;
Sur des glacis je fais qu'il roule,
Et qu'il bouillonne en d'autres lieux ;
Parfois il dort, parfois il coule,
Et toujours il charme les yeux."

The very choice of site depended largely upon the proximity of water, and its presence is urged by the manual-writers, not only for purposes of utility, but also for the sake of ornament. The contemporary complaint against Versailles was the statement that there was no adequate water supply, and Perrault,[1] towards the end of the century, when there was talk of abandoning Versailles, was making detailed plans for a royal residence at the place where the river Orge passed between Viry and Savigny, " à cause du bonheur de sa situation et de l'amas des eaux qui s'y rencontrent . . ."[2] In spite of the adverse opinions of his people the King's greatest source of pride in Versailles lay in the very fact that an abundant supply of water had been brought to a place in which it had been denied by Nature.[3] Thus man triumphed over external Nature and the pride of royalty was satisfied.

Water, indeed, was the main ornament of the Italian and the French garden until well on into the eighteenth century. As surface decoration only we have ample evidence that it was appreciated ; as, for instance, in the *Parterres d'Eau* of Versailles, which we have already mentioned, and which were constructed partly for their decorative value, partly with the intent to reflect the majestic lines of the palace in an unbroken image,[4] or in the Trois Fontaines in the same park, which evoke the rapturous praise of Charles Perrault[5] in whose eyes the simple arrangement of turf and water among

[1] *Vide* Saint-Simon : *Mémoires.* t. XXVIII, p. 159.
[2] Charles Perrault : *Mémoires de ma Vie,* p. 102. In 1702 he actually made the designs for the house, gardens, rivers, fountains and forests. The proposal was not carried out.
[3] P. de Nolhac : *La Création de Versailles.* 1901, p. 159.
[4] P. de Nolhac : *Les Jardins de Versailles.* 1906, p. 12.
[5] Charles Perrault : *Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes,* 1688, p. 250.

the trees, presents a scene which is perfect from the point of view of contrast, order and harmony : " Il semble que l'art ne s'en soit pas meslé," cries the Abbé in his description of the grove, " et que la Nature seule en ait pris le soin ; point de marbre, point d'or, point de bronze, ce n'est que de l'eau et du gazon au milieu d'un bois, mais cette eau et ce gazon sont si bien disposez, et le terrain qui s'élève insensiblement par une douce pente et par des degrez heureusement placez, se présente si agréablement à la vue, qu'elle ne peut se lasser d'un objet si naturel et si aimable." The same *bosquet* rouses the admiration of Félibien, whose remarks may indeed have formed a basis for the Abbé's speech : " C'est celui de tous qui doit le moins à l'Art. Les beautés quoique toutes champêtres et naturelles, ne laissent pas de plaire beaucoup, et ses Fontaines, par leur murmure et par leurs napes d'eau, charment également les yeux et les oreilles."[1]

Thus the sheet of water in its simplest form had a strong appeal for this age. The more ambitious, with a taste for splendour and pageantry, were encouraged to vary the scene with incidental decorations, groups of swans, or an occasional boat, as suggested by Rapin in his *De Hortis* :

> Let silver Swans upon your rivers swim :
> Let painted Barges beautifie the Stream :
> And yielding waves with num'rous oars divide.[2]

The culminating triumph of this incidental adornment was shown by the flotilla of the Grand Canal at Versailles, a troop of gondoliers with their vessels imported

[1] Félibien : *Description Sommaire du Château de Versailles.* 1674. p. 320.
[2] *Of Gardens* : Book III.

specially from Venice in 1674 as a present from the Republic to Louis XIV., and housed in the neighbourhood of the Trianon in *La Petite Venise* to provide a special form of entertainment for the celebrated Fêtes of Versailles.

The open space of water, at least in the larger gardens of France, forms, therefore, a very definite and important part of the scheme as a whole. The same may be said of the fountain, which is not only an incidental attraction but a unit of the central design. André Motet,[1] the steward of the King's gardens, stating the principles of gardening, tells us that the majority of avenues end with a statue or a fountain. Thus, when the fountains played, the waters repeated each other, not only in a single avenue, as in the *Allée d'Eau*, leading to the *Bassin de Neptune*, but from avenue to avenue, so that the jets of water themselves helped in the general composition, prolonging and varying the structure of parallel lines.

The worth of the individual fountain was not only measured by its spectacular value. Félibien[2] lays stress upon the cool freshness created by the arbours and arches of water that filled the *Berceau d'Eau*, a real water-grove through which the visitor might walk without fear of being wetted therein, and many writers comment upon the sound of water as an additional attraction.

In the large gardens the merit sometimes lay in the water alone, but more often in the skilful union of hydraulic with sculptural art, so that, as Félibien said of the *Bassin de Neptune* : " c'est le dernier effort de

[1] Quoted by L. A. Barbet in *Les Grandes Eaux de Versailles*. 1907.
[2] A. Félibien : *Description Sommaire du Château de Versailles*. 1674 p. 67.

l'esprit et du goût." Nearly all the fountains at Versailles are interesting or beautiful examples of contemporary art, even when the waters do not play. It is naturally only when the "Grandes Eaux" are at work that we can appreciate the real value of their art. Since the fundamental intention of the fountain is the display of water, the artist has frequently constructed his group with this principle in his mind, and a part of the meaning of the statue is lost if it is viewed without its companion jet of water.[1] Though the love of this element in Nature is so admirably displayed by this age, yet it is closely linked to the love of sculptural art, a union much older than the seventeenth century, and exhibited in many parts of ancient Europe.

In the smaller gardens there was less possibility of this combination of the two arts, and here the fountains were of a simpler kind. In the garden of Les Diguières Lister notes that the fountains, though small, are curious, but in the greater number he makes no comment at all. One use of water, however, which belonged to small and large gardens alike, is worthy of special mention, namely the grotto, whose popularity descends from Italy to France.

Boyceau devotes a whole chapter in his Treatise[2] to the subject of grottos, which, he says, are made to represent "les antres sauvages." They are to be kept dim, but by no means dark, and to be filled with ornaments of rustic workmanship, porous and hollow stones, rockwork and quaint pebbles, strange petrified masses, and all kinds of shells. "Par les eaux," he declares,

[1] Thus the attitude of the children in the *Fontaine de Cérès* and the *Fontaine de Flore* remains meaningless without the fall of spray, which fills their eyes and gives life to the whole group.

[2] *Traité du Jardinage*, Ch. XI.

" on peut faire mouvoir des engins et machines, par l'ayde desquels marchent des figures, jouent des instruments de musique, sifflent et chantent des oyseaux, et d'autres contrefaits, des arbres et plantes y sont mouillés, formez et peints, comme s'ils étoient naturels." The grotto should further be peopled by figures of marble or bronze and the whole constructed " par un bon ordre d'architecture rustique," mingled with the more cultured type, as if Nature and art were vying with one another in order to beautify the spot. Sometimes even grotesque paintings were to adorn the walls, recalling the ancient designs in prehistoric caves and lending an air of strangeness to the spot. It is disappointing that Boyceau gives us no further details about these " grotesques," for the subject is full of interest at the beginning of this ordered age. The plans that he describes naturally savour of the Renaissance rather than the classical period, and imitate similar designs found in Italy. The description of the *Grotte de Versailles* that we find in Félibien, Mademoiselle de Scudéry, La Fontaine and others, gives us a very clear idea of one of these haunts. In the roof was a representation of the sun, the emblem of the great King ; the structure was largely of shells, depicting fishes and waterbirds, both legendary and real. Warlike trophies in shell and mother of pearl hung on the walls with arabesques and figures of Neptune and Tritons. Four " chandeliers aquatiques,"[1] spouted water from their gilded branches in the form of seaweed, and unseen hydraulic organs (a great feature of the seventeenth-century grotto) were so placed as to

[1] John Evelyn describes the same kind of thing in the Briloft, at Amsterdam. Diary, 1641.

produce strains of melody which, raising the echoes of the cavern, filled the air with a natural music, till the enraptured listener might think himself in the depths of some grove, amid the song of many birds, and this woodland music mingling with the murmur of waters produced an indescribable effect.[1] Not only was the ear deceived by this pleasing device, but various mirrors, encased in the shells, reflected the ornaments of the grot, and many carved birds tricked the eye into believing that the air was full of wings. Sometimes orange trees were ranged here and there in the grotto to add to the general enchantment of the place. The whole was a triumph of art imitating Nature and Nature imitating art, a collection of tricks and devices which gave ample scope for the engineering powers of the age and for the love of display which characterises this period.[2] But the popularity of the *Grotte de Théthys* was short-lived ; when Mansart[3] erected the north wing of the Castle, the grotto was destroyed, and a few old prints retain its memory. Nor is it strictly so much a part of the garden as are many other grottos ; the paved floor, quaint arches and inlaid roof that the print shows us, seem rather to belong to an inside hall than to an open-air construction.

The famous description of La Fontaine[4] adds little of importance to the facts given us by Félibien and Madeleine de Scudéry. He lays special stress upon the various animal and mineral formations used : coral, mother of pearl, shell, stone and rock work, " Caprices infinis du hasard et des eaux," and mentions the six

[1] Mademoiselle de Scudéry : *Promenade de Versailles*, 1669.
[2] Roughly 1660 to 1686.
[3] P. de Nolhac : *Création de Versailles*, p. 127.
[4] La Fontaine : *Amours de Psyché et Cupidon*.

rock faces with grotesque features, the "démons bizarrement forgés" which grinned from the six pillars ranged round the niche. A large part of his account is devoted to the beauties of the group of Apollo with his nymphs, by Girardon and Regnaudin, but his greatest eloquence is expended on the changing play of the fountains with*in* the grot, where there was every variety of form that water could take, as it fell in showers of drops or rose in clouds of spray :

"Plus les jets sont confus, plus leur beauté se montre ;
L'eau se croise, se joint, s'écarte, se rencontre,
Se rompt, se précipite à travers les rochers,
Et fait comme alambics distiller leurs planchers.
Niches, enfoncements, rien ne sert de refuge . . ."

There is not a little satisfaction in the mind of the poet, as he reflects that a shower bath necessarily accompanies the visitor's entrance into the marvellous grot.

Another famous grotto that vied with Versailles in its extravagant devices was the one at Richelieu's country house in Rueil, described in the diary of John Evelyn in 1644 : "We then saw a large and very rare grotto of shell-work, in the shape of satyrs, and other wild fancies ; in the middle stands a marble table, on which a fountain plays in divers forms of glasses, cups, crosses, fans, crowns, etc. Then the fountaineer represented a shower of rain from the top, two extravagant musketeers shot us with a stream of water from their musket barrels . . ." This last incident was indeed one of the common features of the grotto.[1] One recalls La Fontaine's description of the *Grotte de*

[1] Evelyn also mentions the copper basilisk which spouted water to a height of sixty feet, and turned so quickly that one could hardly escape a wetting.

Théthys and the device for showering water upon the departing visitor : " Les quatre amis ne voulurent point être mouillés ; ils prièrent celui qui leur faisait voir la grotte de réserver ce plaisir pour le bourgeois ou pour l'Allemand."[1] There was another well-known example of this trick in the *Grotte de Neptune* at St. Germain, where Louis XIII., as a child, delighted in turning on the waters to wet the visitors,[2] and again at St. Cloud, where were " divers waterworks and contrivances to wet the spectators."

Evelyn gives us at the same time an account of the six terraces of St. Germain, with their subterranean rocks and grottos, " where are represented several objects in the manner of scenes and other motions, by force of water, shown by the light of torches only : amongst these, is Orpheus with his music, and the animals, which dance after his harp ; in the second, is the King and Dolphin (Dauphin) ; in the third, is Neptune sounding his trumpet, his chariot drawn by sea-horses ; in the fourth, the story of Perseus and Andromeda ; mills ; hermitages ; men fishing, birds chirping ; and many other devices. There is also a dry grot to refresh in ; all having a fine prospect towards the river, and the goodly country about it, especially the forest." This grotto also possessed its organ and a host of little imitation birds whose twittering and fluttering charmed the eye and ear and provoked the wonder of the visitor as he marvelled at these quaint mechanical toys.

[1] La Fontaine : *Les Amours de Psyché et Cupidon.* Ed. *Régnier,* p. 42.

[2] P. de Nolhac : *Création de Versailles,* p. 107. Note 2. M. de Nolhac thinks that this custom was of German origin, and that it did not survive long at Versailles.

As far as the subject of Nature is concerned the grotto seems then to have little importance, the more so since it sometimes actually forms part of the house rather than the garden. It seems to alternate between the imitation of Nature by art (or that of art by Nature) and a curious, complex imitation of art by art itself, which recalls some of the literary aspirations of the Précieuses. There is also the Précieuse delight in detail, and joy in the subtle, the bizarre and the rare that shows itself in the collection of semi-precious stones and strange natural forms. We find, too, the proud display of mechanical skill, which in the various fountains of that day finds its fullest expression, together with the love of the marvellous, that revels in a series of surprises, for herein the restrained imagination of the age finds a peculiar outlet.

Two features of the grotto, however, seem to us to represent a certain aspect of the feeling for Nature. The love of water for its own sake, and a feeling of joy in the many forms which it can assume, is an element in the seventeenth-century attitude towards Nature upon which we have already insisted. But in the search for divers minerals and animal formations to beautify these haunts we see man's efforts to explore a new branch of Nature and to acquaint himself with her undiscovered treasures. It is true that these treasures are a convention of this art, and that their adoption is due to Italian influence and by no means peculiar to this age, or even to France; nevertheless their popularity shows that for a time at least they have become a part of French art, and the detailed admiration shown by writers of the merit of La Fontaine and his friends proves that society as a whole appreciated their value.

Another interesting peculiarity of the grotto was the artificial echo which was often arranged, so as to multiply the strains of the organs and the murmur and splash of the waters. This echo was not indeed limited to the grot, but was sometimes produced at the end of an avenue or in the depths of some grove. Evelyn comments enthusiastically on the artificial echo in the gardens of the Tuileries, which is " never without some fair nymph singing to its grateful returns. Standing . . . under . . . a little cabinet of hedges, the voice seems to descend from the clouds ; at another, as if it was underground."

But if the mineral, as well as the vegetable kingdom, is represented in the French garden, the animal world is by no means neglected. We have, as instances of this, the menageries, aviaries, volaries and ornamental fishponds, even if we discard the apiaries, poultry-yards and game preserves, as being purely utilitarian.

The menagerie usually consisted of a stone building, sufficiently large to house the number of beasts required. In the Tuileries Evelyn describes " a building in which are kept wild beasts for the King's pleasure, a bear, a wolf, a wild boar, a leopard," etc. At Versailles the menagerie was so large in size that it contained a suite of apartments, two wings with a great " salon " in the middle where, says Félibien, " une grande Princesse va souvent goûter les plaisirs de la campagne et de la solitude." An iron balcony ran all round the " salon " in the middle and overlooked seven different yards, in which birds and curious animals were kept. It was the rare[1] that was cultivated in the menageries, and largely

[1] C'est un lieu rempli de plusieurs sortes de volatiles et de quadrupèdes, la plupart très rares et de pays éloignés." *Amours de Psyché*, p. 28.

in the volaries too, and La Fontaine and his friends, visiting this pavilion, took most pleasure in the Ardea Virgo, a kind of crane, which struck them as being both beautiful and odd : " Ce qui leur plut davantage, ce furent les demoiselles de Numidie, et certains oiseaux pêcheurs qui ont un bec extrêmement long, avec une peau au-dessous qui leur sert de poche. Leur plumage est blanc, mais d'un blanc plus clair que celui des cygnes ; même de près il paroit carné, et tire sur le couleur de rose vers la racine. On ne peut rien voir de plus beau : ce sont espèce de cormorans."[1] In 1653 we have the assurance of Claude Mauger that the menagerie at Versailles contained cassowaries, ostriches, bustards, pelicans, Egyptian hens, Arabian ducks, China pheasants and several Indian geese. In addition to these birds he mentions a number of unusual animals : " Indian cows, Barbary camel, Muscovy and Polonian cats, a Persian camel, and a hog of the Empire of Monomotapa in the East Indies, and many others, whose names I do not know."

It seems probable that aviaries were more popular than menageries, at any rate in the smaller gardens. Lister, in his sight-seeing in Paris, mentions two or three, Evelyn speaks of one in the public garden of the Tuileries, and one in the Queen's private garden, of that of the Count of Liancourt and others. Sometimes the form is less conventional and more natural, as in the water fowls' nesting-place, which he describes, on the two islands of the fountains at Rueil, where rockwork overgrown with moss and ivy, provided a refuge for the wild birds. Lister, likewise, describes the Amphitheatre of the Tuileries as a harbour for singing

[1] Des pélicans (Note 4 on p. 28 of the *Amours de Psyché*).

birds : " Nothing can be more pleasant than this garden," he writes, " where in the Groves of Wood the latter end of *March*, *Blackbirds*, and Throstles and Nightingales sing most sweetly all the morning . . . for no birding is suffered here near this City, and the Fields round the Town are all, everywhere, full of Partridges, and Hares, and other Game."

In some parts of the garden it was the custom to set cages of singing birds, the cages varying in size according to the space available. Round these a species of camouflage was frequently arranged ; the wires were covered by the branches of the trees trained over the cage for that purpose, so that those strolling through the garden might hear the song coming from the boughs of the trees, and might have the temporary illusion of the wild life of the forest. Evelyn describes the volary at Fontainebleau, which had a cupola in the middle of it, and great trees and bushes, with two drinking fountains for the birds. These larger structures consisted of both singing and ornamental birds, the vivaria often containing such large creatures as ostriches, peacocks, cranes and swans. In some, as in the menagerie at Versailles, the larger birds were mixed with beasts, such as deer of various kinds, or these last might be by themselves in a part of the park set aside for that purpose, as it often is in the gardens of the present day. The birds used to stock the cages and aviaries for songsters were the nightingale, the wren (which *La Maison Rustique* recommended as singing nearly as well as the first), the goldfinch, canary, linnet, tit, " passe solitaire,"[1] some varieties of thrush, the

[1] " A little black-brown Owsell . . that's ever alone, or if in company, with Sparrows, among stone walls, or on the tops of houses, where sometime she singeth prettily." Cotgrave's *Dictionary*.

" calendre,"[1] the crested lark and the lark. A number of books were printed at this time that gave instruction in the feeding, training, teaching and general care of the small birds kept in cages and volaries. Dézallier d'Argenville seems to have been expressing the very general feeling when he says, after praising the flower garden as the greatest source of pleasure : " Mais il n'y a pas moins de plaisir de voir les beaux compartiments, les berceaux et cabinets, les plaisantes bordures de lavande, romarin, buis ou autres choses semblables, ouïr la douce musique d'une infinité de petits oiseaux, qui sans cesse jour et nuit font leur ramage naturel sur les haies et les arbres du Parterre . . ."

The fishpond is another example of the part that animal life played in these parks. The seventeenth-century nobleman was no stranger to the amusement of watching fish come to be fed, and the courtiers idling by the marble basins of the fountains often took their pleasure in this way. It is at Fontainebleau also that Evelyn tells us of the canal, an English mile in length, " at the end of which rise three jettos in the form of a fleur de lis of a great height." Here, he says, the carps come familiarly to hand to be fed. The manuals in like manner suggest that the gardener should train his fish to feed out of the hand, so that he should have the pleasure of seeing the movement of their bright forms beneath the water.

Our brief survey of the main features in the art of gardening leads us to draw two or three conclusions. The importance of that art in the seventeenth century is so well known as to be beyond dispute, and the numerous descriptions in literature and the frequent publica-

[1] Greatest kind of lark.—Cotgrave.

tions on the subject have established the fact that this taste was not confined to the court alone, but was indulged by a large section of the community, by the majority, in fact, of those whose means were sufficient to provide them with the land. It is clear then, that in this art the classical age finds expression for the appreciation of Nature which is excluded from a certain part of its literature. It is not the kind of appreciation that we find in the nineteenth century, nor even in the pre-romantic period. This is an age in which man, exercising almost to excess his faculties for self-mastery and self-control, rules his life and art rigidly. If he exceeds in any way, he exceeds voluntarily and not through weakness of purpose, and whatsoever instruments he uses, he handles them with set design ; he is essentially the master of his tools. Moreover, he is still learning to wield his power over Nature, as the marvellous engineering feats of the age show ; he takes delight in showing his mastery over the crude elements. Therefore his conception of Nature is less as of an element whose beauty is inherent in itself, than as of a raw material which is eminently suitable to be welded into a design ; he inclines to use Nature herself to represent Nature artificially ; he makes artificial groves peopled with artificial birds, instead of cultivating natural woods ; he forms imitation springs, flowing over man-made rockwork instead of finding natural fountains, or again, when his taste grows simpler and he tires of these precious devices, he moulds Nature into a conventional design, perceiving her in terms of lines and angles, points and curves, a triumph in the fulfilment of his unerringly accurate sense of form. Moreover, he revels in his love of the great and the

marvellous, as is manifest in the colossal proportion of his schemes, and he throws into his gardening the massive energy of a forcible age. Nor do these qualities exclude a love of Nature, but it is love for a Nature restricted and refined, a Nature which is frequently, though by no means always, a means to an end, rather than an end in itself.

CHAPTER II

TRAVEL AND "PROMENADE"

But if it remains an undisputed fact that the Frenchman's appreciation for Nature is nowhere more evident than in his cultivation of his garden, how much may be said of his knowledge of the land which lies beyond his own and of his affection for the landscape of France as a whole? What efforts does he make to pass beyond his own territory and to observe the country which has served as an inspiration to generations of poets from the *Chanson de Roland* onwards? What instances are there, in this age, of men travelling for the sake of the pleasure afforded by travel itself, and lastly, what examples do we find of travellers whose observation is devoted, in part at least, to external Nature, to wood, field and river, rather than to buildings and cities? Let us briefly examine the facts and see to what extent travel was popular in the seventeenth century in France, and how much it was practised by the people as a whole.

Setting aside travel outside the country itself, with which for the moment we are not concerned, let us examine the conditions at home. It must be owned that the Golden Age of travelling was still far distant at this time. Even in England, where travel was more popular than in France, Fynes Moryson decides, at

the beginning of the century, that travel is unsuitable for women, children, old men or invalids, and that only the man of robust health and young middle-age should venture to journey abroad. Perils and difficulties of all kinds beset the wanderer, from dangerous cartruts and deep ditches to fierce highwaymen and disease-bearing Bohemians who thronged the way. Endless time and a considerable amount of money were spent on quite short journeys, and he who fell ill on the way was in all probability a dead man.[1]

The state of the main highways in France was probably better than in England at this time.[2] In 1644 John Evelyn passed along the road between Paris and Orleans, which he says was paved with a small square free stone, like most of the roads in France, " so that the country does not much molest the traveller with dirt and ill way, as in England," and Louis Coulon likewise commends the French roads as being much better than those of Germany.[3] Some of them seem indeed to have been excellent. La Fontaine enthusiastically describes the Avenue along the Loire near Bordeaux; it was a beautiful road and beautifully kept, being regularly repaired, he tells us, whenever it showed signs of giving way. On the other hand, the smaller roads had the same features in all three countries: they were ill-constructed and unpaved, scored with deep ruts, and either flanked by ditches or overgrown with bushes and trees. Evelyn mentions a

[1] *Vide* Claude Perrault: *Voyage à Bordeaux en* 1669. His brother fell ill on the way to Bordeaux and died a few weeks later.

[2] *Vide* Joan Parkes: *Travel in England in the XVIIth century*. 1925. Chapter II deals with the subject of the English roadways.

[3] *Le Fidèle Conducteur en Allemagne*. 1654. Edward Leigh, in his *Diatribes*, 1671, quotes Sir Benjamin Ruddierd, who declares that " France is a good country to ride through."

very rocky and rugged way between Rouen and Havre[1] and La Fontaine graphically describes the road near Bellac, which was so bad that of eight or ten persons passing on horse or in coaches, three or four regularly broke their necks.[2] These lesser roads became, of course, impassable in winter, when they would be deep in snow, in the north at least, and flooded by the neighbouring rivers, so that in 1671 we find Madame de Grignan unable to leave Paris, and obliged to delay her journey to Provence for many days because the ways were so deep under water. "I do not expect her to avoid the cold, nor the mud, nor the fatigues of travel," writes her mother, "but I do not want her to be drowned."[3] The bridges became at such times even more dangerous than the roads, since the lesser ones were liable to collapse under the force of the rising waters. In winter, too, the passenger traffic on the rivers became impracticable, travel by water being at other times popular in France, and apparently affording considerable comfort and a speed not much less than that achieved on the road.[4]

Among gentlemen, travelling was usually done on horseback, especially by the more adventurous, such as Fynes Moryson and Evelyn. La Fontaine did the greater part of his journey through Limousin in a stage coach, which he joined at Bourg-la-Reine. These coaches plied regularly, though with great unpunctuality, between certain towns, and in addition there was a great number of "coches de remise," which were

[1] *Diary*: March 23rd, 1644.
[2] *VI Lettre à sa femme*, 19 Sept. 1663. They had to wait next day while their horses were reshod.
[3] Mme. de Sévigné: *Lettres*, 16 janvier, 1671.
[4] Claude Perrault: *Voyage à Bordeaux*. The end of the journey was done by boat.

hired by the month, and were so well apportioned and fitted as to appear like private carriages.[1] Indeed, coaches seem to have increased in use towards the end of the century, for Fynes Moryson tells us that the French seldom used them for journeys,[2] but to the foreigners who wish to employ them he points out that horses may be hired either for a short stretch, with a guide to return them, or in relays, in which case no guide is necessary, or again for a long stretch, when they are returned to some friend of the owner at the end of the journey. Lister admires the springs of French coaches, especially in Paris, but we gather that, though the roads may be superior in France, in England the horses are better. The post service is better regulated[3] and the transport is quicker, for the very quality of the roads in France make them hard for the horses' feet and retard progress.[4]

Misson declares that there is nothing in London or England like the hostelries in France. Whether or no there is accuracy in his statement, it seems clear that the French provision of inns was very fair for that time. In all his wanderings Evelyn seldom complains of bad lodging or bad food, neither do La Fontaine nor Claude Perrault find much source of complaint, though the latter on more than one occasion inveighs against the noise and disorder that prevailed. In one case, however, the tumult was caused, not as he at first had believed, by peasants or lackeys, but by six fathers of the Oratory, who were trying to practise the

[1] Lister. *A Journey to Paris in* 1698.
[2] *An Itinerary*, Vol. III, 1605-1617.
[3] Misson: *Mémoires et Observations faites par un voyageur en Angleterre*. 1698.
[4] Evelyn: *Diary*, April 19th, 1644.

precepts of Saint François de Sales, namely, " to laugh without reason and appear contented and satisfied at all costs." " Un d'entre eux," adds Perrault, " qui se trouva de la connaissance de M. de Gomout et parent de M. du Laurent soupa avec nous et nous pensa étourdir par un ris continuel." In the more uncivilized or mountainous districts of the south and east, and in the areas impoverished by war and pillaging soldiers, the inns were inferior, and sometimes little more than hovels, but in many cases the fare was good, the beds were dry[1] and clean[2] and the host ready to entertain his guests. A meal of mutton, capon, pullet or partridge at the ordinary, or *table d'hôte*, followed by fruit grown in the locality was a common form of supper.

The conditions of travel then in the seventeenth century in France were not much inferior to those of the succeeding age, in so far as the roads, carriages and inns were concerned. There remains, however, a list of minor difficulties and serious dangers which attended the traveller in the age of Louis XIV. To begin with, he could rarely obtain a single room, or even a single bed, so that, if he belonged to no party, he was subject to share with unpleasant, dirty, or even diseased fellow-travellers ; he was liable, as a stranger, to be robbed by everyone who crossed his path, and he was exposed

[1] Fynes Moryson mentions a common custom, that of bringing the clean sheets to be aired before the traveller.

[2] Claude Mauger, in *The Advancement of the French Tongue*, 1653, includes the following phrase translated into French, " Aire my sheets well. Let me have clean ones, I will pay you double for my chamber." As this phrase is included in several of his conversations we may conclude that it was a necessary admonition.

This adjective would, of course, not have exactly the same significance then as now. La Fontaine only once complains of fleas on the journey through Limousin, but then as a subject for jest, not for protest. We recall Pepys near Salisbury on June 12th, 1668 : " Up, finding our beds good, but lousy ; which made us merry."

to all kinds of vicissitudes of climate and weather. The wars, especially the wars of Spain, had left much pillaging on the part of the soldiers, and when these had disappeared there remained the discharged mercenaries and the rabble that always follows an army, to lay waste the country and prey upon the travellers. Fynes Moryson describes how he was robbed on his way to Chalons in 1595 by some soldiers at the command of their officer, and only preserved a part of his money by carrying it hidden in a box of "stinking ointment for scabs" and in a cloth stuck with needles and wound round with coloured threads, both of which useful articles the miscreants stamped on in the road, and that although the wary traveller had sold his horse in Metz, so as to offer less provocation to footpads. Likewise Evelyn in his journeys from the north to Paris went in constant fear of pillaging soldiers and ordinary thieves, and La Fontaine shivers at the remembrance of the Vallée de Tréfou, which was a perfect nest of thieves, a narrow road between a mountain on one side and a dense wood on the other, a famous haunt of robbers as bad as the forest of Bondy, where two game-keepers of the Maréchale de Bassompierre had triumphantly robbed and murdered some twenty years before.[1] It is true that Fynes Moryson declares that thieves are usually content to rob without murder ; the journey was none the less full of hazards.

Moreover, the average traveller was heavily encumbered with baggage. Besides all the personal luggage that he needed for a long journey he must carry all the accessories necessary for the various emergencies that

[1] *Vide* note to La Fontaine's description in the edition of the *Grands Écrivains de la France*.

might arise en route, weapons to battle with his enemies, food to support the party where the inn accommodation was poor, and even plate and cutlery, if the company were too aristocratic to depend upon the rough utensils of the hostelries.[1] And to add to the minor difficulties of the journey, it happened not infrequently that none of the party knew the way, and though in many towns there were recognized guides to escort the travellers on their road, these often were ill-instructed themselves and misled their charges sufficiently to cause serious inconvenience and often danger.

These material conditions inevitably affect the amount of travelling done for pleasure in the seventeenth century, and are a small, but definite, cause of the rarity of journeys recorded wherein the wanderer has had in view the observation of Nature. The contrast between the lack of such travelling at this time, and the frequency of the " voyage pittoresque "[2] in actual life and in literature in the late eighteenth century is too striking to be explained by the influence of the birth of romanticism alone. Where travel is so difficult, obviously it is only the enthusiast who will undertake it, nor is his enthusiasm alone sufficient ; he must have also time and means. Furthermore, the man of letters, whose work will be the most important source of our information here, has little or no encouragement to leave Paris. Is not the capital the supreme centre of literary civilization ? To leave it is to cut himself off

[1] Perrault in the *Voyage à Bordeaux*, says of Saint-Genest d'Ambrère: " L'hôtellerie était fort mauvaise, ce fut là où on commença à se servir des cuillers et des couteaux qui étaient dans notre bagage."

[2] Mornet : *Le Sentiment de la Nature en France de Jean-Jacques Rousseau à Bernardin de Saint-Pierre.* 1907. *1ère* Partie. Ch. II.

from all that is most important, to attain a comparatively useless end by most uncomfortable means.

The fact, too, that the King was settled at Paris or Versailles has great weight here. Were the court to have undertaken long journeys, for purposes unconnected with war, a new and most interesting feature would inevitably have been introduced into French literature and social life. A curious passage from Lister's *Journey to Paris* reveals his opinion on this subject. He has already drawn attention to his taste for " Nature rather than Dominion," and his preference for the meanest hedge in the sunny climate of Languedoc to the finest Alley in Versailles. " I wonder," he exclaims of the King, " nobody puts him in mind of that Paradise of *France*, *Languedoc*, where he may be with ease in four days, at the Rate that Kings use to Travel. I had this Discourse at Table with one of the Introducteurs to the Ambassadour at *Versailles* ; but he could not bear it, it being against the Interest of all settled Courts to remove, though it were never so good for their Princes health."

Not that there is not a good deal of travel for pleasure in this age,[1] for letters and memoirs provide us with evidence of many journeys undertaken for instruction and observation.[2] The inherent curiosity of the

[1] The large number of books of practical advice on travelling bear witness to its increasing popularity. Manuals of phrases for travel abroad, hints about inns and customs, are published in considerable numbers. A much larger number, however, exists in England than in France, and it is probable that such works owe their origin to English influence. There is little, if any, reference in these to the observation of Nature.

[2] A. Babeau, in his *Voyageurs en France depuis la Renaissance jusqu'à la Révolution*, 1885, gives a short account of the doings of the most famous travellers of this age. His list includes, besides the English travellers Coryat, Evelyn and Lister, the Duchess of Longueville, La Grande Mademoiselle, Mme. de Sévigné, Mme. d'Aulnoy, Chapelle and Bachaumont, Regnard, La Fontaine, Racine and others.

French mind and eye is a great stimulus to travel at all times. But the motive is nearly always the observation of men and cities and little of Nature.[1] Sorbières, indeed, praises enthusiastically the undulating country of Kent, with its pleasant woods and wonderful lawns.[2] Perrault[3] notes little in Nature but the wormwood growing wild round the Château de Blaye near Bordeaux and the great tamarisk trees by the sea, or the queer tombs at Saint-Séverin that hold water which varies in depth with the waxing and waning of the moon—all of them instances of the curiosities of Nature rather than of her beauties. Yet he gives detailed and interesting accounts of the buildings and towns that they passed on the way, with sketches that bear witness to his artistic taste as well as his scientific knowledge.

It is the independent mind of La Fontaine that provides us with the best material here, the " child of sleep and idleness " who was ashamed of having lived so long and seen nothing.[4] " Travelling is a real pleasure," he states in his first letter to his wife, " one is always meeting something remarkable," and interspersed with his anecdotes about the pretty peasant girls, the notary who sang incessantly and very badly, and the pseudo-countess who grumbled at the beds and fare, he makes notes of the wonderful views, the pleasant road running through hedgerows which so charmed him that he walked that part of the stage, or the wooded hillsides sloping to the Loire. The gardens

[1] There is, of course, a big class of travellers of which we make no mention ; the strolling troops of actors, such as Scarron describes in *Le Roman Comique*. As their travels were undertaken for business rather than pleasure, and leave little evidence of any appreciation of Nature, they do not concern us here.

[2] *Relation d'un Voyage en Angleterre*, Paris, 1664.

[3] *Voyage à Bordeaux*.

[4] *Relation d'un Voyage de Paris en Limousin*.

of Richelieu fill him with delight, and he escapes from his friends and wanders through its shaded avenues

> " Comme au soir, lorsque l'ombre arrive en un séjour,
> Ou lorsqu'il n'est plus nuit, et n'est pas encor jour,"

until the weary M. de Châteauneuf comes to interrupt his poetry and warn him of the lateness of the hour, when, forgetful of his supper and of the impatience of his friends, he concludes: " enfin nous nous retrouvâmes dans cette place qui est au-devant du château, moi fort satisfait, et M. de Châteauneuf, qui était en grosses bottes, fort las."

The other example of a traveller with a sense of the picturesque is Mme. de Sévigné in her frequent journeyings across France. " La beauté des promenades est au delà de ce que je puis dire," she writes on one occasion, and again from Bourbilly: " Je trouve mes belles prairies, ma petite rivière, mes magnifiques bois et mon beau moulin, à la même place où je les avais laissés." Fragments such as these are scattered throughout the descriptions of her travels: in one place she complains of the " chien de petit village " (Anse, near Lyons), in which she is staying, in another that the devil has been let loose in Marseilles, and that there is the worst weather on record. Perhaps she derives less pleasure than La Fontaine from his journey, but more, certainly, than Racine, who was most of all impressed by the noise of the cicalas at Usez and the oppressive heat, and longed to be back in Paris.

But if travel provides little scope at this time for the lover of Nature, a protracted stay in the country affords him every advantage. The habit of maintaining a country residence was not confined to the King and his

ministers, as we have seen, but extended right through the nobility to the lesser gentry. Saint-Simon expresses the spirit of the time in his description of Marly,[1] when he says that the King, " lassé du beau et de la foule, se persuada qu'il voulait quelquefois du petit et de la solitude," and searched in the neighbourhood of Versailles for something to satisfy this new fancy. And in the construction of the " hermitage " of Marly Saint-Simon sees once more the taste for forcing Nature, which had characterized the construction of Versailles. At Marly, he states, the prevailing rule was that no one should be bored, and everyone amused, the essence of the *Villeggiatura* being rest and freedom from care combined with more positive pleasures. Thus Fouquet before his disgrace at Vaux-le-Vicomte, Richelieu at Rueil, Racan at Roche-Racan, Boileau at Auteuil, and Mme. de Sévigné at the Rochers, put into practice the precept of the King that a sojourn in the country is necessary to bring relief to the cares of the world. Thus Mme. de la Fayette can write to Ménage in 1657:[2] " Je me réjouis avec vous de ce que vous allez vous retirer à Meudon. La solitude est si agréable et la campagne est si belle présentement que c'est assurément un plaisir extrême que d'y être. Vous y travaillerez agréablement à vos lettres," and a fortnight later:[3] " J'ai bien envie de vous savoir à Meudon. Il fait si beau à la campagne que j'ai pitié de tous ceux qui sont présentement à Paris. Peut-être leur fais-je pitié à mon tour d'être à la campagne mais comme je ne m'en fais pas à moi-même je m'en console facilement." And Mme. de Sévigné revels in the first appearance of

[1] Vol. XXVIII, p. 170.
[2] Lettre du 14 mai, ed : Ashton.
[3] Lettre du 29 mai, ed : Ashton.

Spring,[1] with its reds preparing the way for the green of summer and providing a rival pleasure to the conversation of her friends. In spite of the dictum[2] of the Marchioness of Rambouillet, there are few of the French nobility, even among the *précieux*, who are incapable of appreciating the joys of a country residence.

Loret, in *La Muze Historique*, complains of his exile with the Duchess of Schonberg, at her country house at Nanteuil, where in September they were joined by the King. The house was a " fort belle maison (mais champêtre) " and the writer longed to be back in Paris to find some news congenial to his pen and suitable for the amusement of his patroness. Even the fact that he lives at the expense of the Duchess and feeds on chicken, partridges, turtle doves, pigeons and young rabbits, fails to console him for his absence from the capital and his deep regret at the fashionable exile.

The custom of a temporary sojourn in the country was varied by the institution of the " Promenade," a form of amusement as popular in the seventeenth century as in the eighteenth,[3] and the very sociability that characterizes the French nation tends to increase here the appreciation of certain aspects of Nature. The lover of the " promenade " in this age does not seek his pleasures alone ; his fondness for society leads him to draw his friends with him into the park or the avenue and to use Nature as the setting for his intellectual or emotional delights. From the early days of the *Salons* to the end of the century, the aristoc-

[1] Lettre du 19 et du 26 avril, 1690.

[2] " Les esprits doux et amateurs des belles-lettres ne trouvent jamais leur compte à la campagne."

[3] *Vide* A. Babeau : *Les Bourgeois d'Autrefois*, Paris, 1886. Ch. IX, pp. 210–217.

racy and the bourgeois repair to the parks and gardens of Paris in the cool of the evening and even the common people imitate their betters in those public grounds, which are not exclusively reserved for the upper classes. So in a description of a performance at the house of the Lord Marshall in 1654 we find that the pleasures consist of "Les nobles plaizirs des chasseurs" and "la promenade,"[1] and Le Père Le Moine imparts to the Marchioness of Lenville his prescription for a long life :

> " Vouse prendrez toutes les semaines,
> Six dragmes du Bois de Vincennes,
> Sur autant de feuilles de Cours,
> Teintes aux rayons des beaux jours " ;

and, provided that there is no contagion from the bites of that dangerous insect, love, he further prescribes:

> " Deux livres d'air pris sur la plaine,
> Voisine du lit de la Seine,
> Ou pris sur la cime du Mont,
> Où Boulogne élève le front," etc.

his conclusion being that she should avoid all medicine in the way of drugs, and confine herself to open air and exercise.

Once again Dr. Martin Lister proves an important eye-witness to the customs of the time. " That which makes the dwelling in this City very diverting for the People of Quality," he writes, " is the facility of going out with their coaches into the Fields, on every side; it lying round, and the Avenues to it so well paved; and the Places of Airing so clean, open, or shady, as you please, or the season of the year, and time of the day requires: As the *Cour de la Reyne*, *Bois de Bologne*,

[1] *La Muze Historique*, le 25 juillet, 1654.

Bois de Vincennes, *les Sables de Vaugerarde*, etc. . . . As for their *Recreations and Walks*," he continues later, " there are no people more fond of coming together, to see and to be seen. This conversation without doubt takes up a great part of their time. And for this purpose, the *Cour de la Reyne* is frequented by all People of Quality. It is a treble Walk of Trees of a great length, near the River side, the middle Walk having above double the breadth of the two side ones, and will hold eight files of Coaches, and in the middle a great open Circle to turn, with fine Gates at both ends. Those that would have better and free air, go further, and drive into the *Bois de Bologne*, others out of other Parts of the Town to *Bois de Vincennes*, scarce any side amiss. In like manner these Persons light and Walk in the *Tuilleries*, *Luxembourg*, and other Gardens, belonging to the Crown and Princes, (all which are very spacious) and are made convenient, with *many Seats* for the Entertainment of all People; the Lacquies and Mob excepted." These more distant excursions took place generally in the late afternoon or early evening in the Summer. Towards eight or nine o'clock the carriages would return and the occupants descend at the gate of the Tuileries, where they would stroll about in the cool of the evening, talking to their acquaintance, practising the art of gallantry, listening to the echo, or admiring the fountains and groves. Sentinels posted at the gates expelled the lackeys and the populace, whose disturbing presence would have spoiled the harmony of these finished performers and their artistic *décor*.

Frequently the excursion would be longer still, and the King or his courtiers would set out in state from

Paris or Versailles to visit a friend in the country. Of such a nature were the magnificent fêtes at Vaux-le-Vicomte, that helped to bring about the downfall of Fouquet, in his attempts to provide suitable entertainment for the visit of the King. Better fortune attended the efforts of Colbert in 1677 when the King undertook a "promenade" to Sceaux to visit the minister. The reception and entertainment were devoid of pomp, though sumptuous enough, an eye-witness tells us; the art of the whole seems to have lain in the simplicity and sense of proportion. It is difficult for the modern mind to conceive the simplicity of those days. The fête began with a preliminary stroll through the gardens, interrupted by the Prologue from the Opera of Hermione. Later the walk was enlivened by various amusements, voices singing on one side, the strains of instrumental music sounding from the other, a continuous series of surprises whose principal charm lay in the fact that they seemed to be impromptu. The Supper was "worthy of the giver," and words fail the writer in his description! It was followed by fireworks, whose noise was increased a thousandfold by the natural echoes of the place. After this lively and most popular form of entertainment the company passed into the Orangery, where Racine's Phèdre was acted and a comedy followed. The evening concluded with more fireworks and dancing in the village. Of such a kind were the "promenades" of the nobility in the age of Louis XIV., and we are slightly staggered when the writer concludes mildly that the whole was "abondante en toutes choses, sans qu'il y eût rien de superflu."[1]

[1] *Nouveau Mercure Galant*, 31 juillet, 1677.

Of great interest also is that common feature of the seventeenth century, the "promenade littéraire," in which group we may include the literary, the artistic and the moral "promenade." Just as society chooses to combine its social pleasures with its liking for the more refined and cultivated forms of Nature, so the poet and religious, like Racine, sings his hymns of praise while strolling through the fields of Port-Royal, the student of language and manners imparts his observations as he walks with his friend by the sea,[1] the artist or critic chooses Versailles for the basis of his discussions on art,[2] the instructor of youth enlivens his remarks about the characteristics of "l'honnête homme" with the practice of one of his precepts, namely, "la promenade"[3] and the moralist fits the seven cardinal virtues into appropriate niches in the gardens of Richelieu.[4] Instruction, whether of an artistic, scientific or moral nature, is more easily imparted in the open air than in the study; the teacher discourses at length, while the imaginary pupil submissively walks by his side; all but the most hardened moralists realize that the "honnête homme" prefers to take his instruction and serious reading modified by a little relaxation; the setting which recalls to his mind the familiar scenes of his everyday life, the walks of Richelieu or the avenues of Versailles lend a touch of familiarity to the aridity of the subject, and make him feel more at home.

[1] Le Père Bouhours: *Entretiens d'Ariste et d'Eugène.*

[2] Félibien: *Entretiens sur les Vies et sur les Ouvrages des plus Excellens Peintres Anciens et Modernes.* 1707.

[3] *Le Lycée du Sieur Bardin, où en plusieurs promenades il est traité des Connoissances, des Actions, et des Plaisirs d'un Honneste homme.* Paris 1632.

[4] Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin: *Promenades de Richelieu.* 1653.

Sometimes, of course, the part played by the natural description in these works is as important as the intellectual or moral side. Desmarets, in his analysis of the Christian Virtues, in spite of the preciosity of his style and his desire to flatter his patroness, shows a real and personal affection for the Nature that he describes, a sympathy for the felled tree, that recalls Laprade, a rejoicing in the joys of Nature, in the coming of Spring, the pleasant fall of night, or the freshness of the dawn, that justifies La Fontaine's ardent praise of his work. When Desmarets comes to the subject of night, indeed, he forgets the highly instructive tone of a great part of his discourse, the moralist withdraws and the artist takes his place, offering us a pleasant study of light and shadow which is among the best of the picturesque passages of the age, and reminds us of Hugo's play of light and his " clair-obscur " in certain passages of Notre Dame de Paris:—

" Que j'aime la nuit fraische, et ses lumières sombres
Lors que l'astre des mois en adoucit les ombres!
Que ce palais pompeux me paroist bien plus beau,
Quand il n'est éclairé que du second flambeau,
Dont la douce clarté d'autres graces apporte
Rechauffant les reliefs par une ombre plus forte.
Sous la corniche aigüe, une longue noirceur
Sur le mur qui la porte en marque l'espaisseur ;
Et chaque niche creuse a de chaque statue
La figure imprimée, obscure et rabattue.
Une brune couleur, des balcons avancez
Trace sur un fonds blanc les angles renversez ;
Et de chaque Obélisque à pointes égalées
Tombent sur le pavé les pointes affilées."

It is only towards the end of this passage that the poet remembers that clemency is the subject

of his verse, and even then there is real feeling in his lines:

> " Que loin de vous s'enfuit la triste inquiétude,
> Douce ombre, doux silence, et douce solitude! "[1]

In other cases, a writer has skilfully turned his scenery to good account, as for instance, Félibien in his *Entretiens*. Here, where the subject of the discourse is art, and in especial, landscape-painting, the setting of Versailles or Saint-Cloud forms an excellent series of examples for the teacher. But Félibien is an artist himself with the trained senses of his trade, and in his picture of the clouds chasing each other across the sky, of the reflections in the water, and of the variation of light and shade on the hillsides, we find one of the rare instances of a highly developed sense of colour, sound and smell : " Nous descendimes dans le Jardin, dont les parterres émaillez d'une agréable variété de toutes sortes de fleurs, étoient encore embellis et parfumez de Myrtes, de Jasmins et d'Orangers, qui surpassoient par la beauté de leurs feuilles, de leurs fleurs, et de leurs fruits, tout ce que les émeraudes, l'or et l'argent peuvent composer de plus riche. Nous choisîmes pour nous asseoir un endroit commode et d'où nous pouvions voir en même temps la rivière de Seine qui serpente entre les prairies et les collines qui la bordent. Il y avoit dans l'air quelques légers nuages, dont l'ombre se répandant inégalement sur les montagnes et dans la plaine faisoit que la vue trouvoit de temps en temps des endroits plus sombres comme pour se reposer après avoir parcouru les parties illuminées de la grande clarté du soleil. Enfin ce lieu étoit pour lors un véri-

[1] *Promenades de Richelieu* : Septième Promenade ; de la Mansuétude.

table séjour de délices où le silence régnoit avec tant de douceur qu'il n'étoit interrompu que par le bruit des fontaines, dont l'on voyoit briller les eaux au travers de l'obscurité des arbres."[1] Elsewhere in the same *Entretien* we find the same vivid perception of light and colour : the rain-washed trees and gay brightness of the landscape after the storm, soft clouds scattered through the sky and lit with divers colours by the sun's rays, the general impression being one of the newness, brightness and freshness which prevails in summer after a sharp storm of rain.

Of the "Promenade de Versailles" and its information on the curiosities of the King's garden enough has already been said, yet once more it is significant that the famous Sappho also chooses this literary form. Nor can we conclude the subject without mention of Racine's *Promenade de Port-Royal*, one of his earliest works,[2] and naturally somewhat crude and immature.

In the practice of walking and riding in the country, therefore, we see one of the most important expressions of the appreciation of Nature in the seventeenth century. It does not, of course, compare with the delight in exotic scenery, or the outburst of passion for the Alps, that belong to the time of Rousseau, but it is the expression of a certain affection for Nature within carefully imposed limits. Curiosity and delight in Nature are not yet sufficiently strong, except in individual cases, to triumph over material obstacles ; fashion, a very powerful goddess, does not authorize excursions into wild Nature, though she does much to popularize

[1] *Ve Entretien.*
[2] 1658.

the cultivated kind. Man deliberately frequents a certain type of scenery ; as in his gardens, so in his walks and rides ; he brings Nature within his own bounds, he does not usually cast off convention, and set out to discover her untamed. Yet a spice of adventure is not lacking in his composition; though society, as a rule, confines itself to the kind of excursion described above, it takes pleasure also in the more adventurous type, as is instanced by the popularity of the small group of travel literature, a *genre* apart, consisting of the simple narration of real or imaginary travels, such as the *Voyage de Chapelle et de Bachaumont* and the journey of La Fontaine. And lastly it delights in going further afield, and in contemplating Nature in distant lands: the scenery of Canada, America and the Antilles.[1] But here imagination is stronger than the reality and the little evidence of appreciation of exotic Nature comes to us mainly at second-hand.

[1] *Vide* Chinard : *L'Amérique et le Rêve Exotique*. 1913. Ch. I, II and III.

CHAPTER III

THE PASTORAL IDEAL

1: Drama

In the art of gardening, therefore, in the cultivation of the *Villeggiatura*, and to some extent also in the practice of travel, the seventeenth century indulges a taste for Nature which is vigorous enough, though more restricted in force and variety than the same quality in the nineteenth century. It is well-nigh impossible to attempt to analyse the manner in which this aspect of social life reacts upon literature, or the extent to which literature modifies the practices of society. We have shown that the existence of a gardening literature now produces, now emanates from a delight in the cultivation of gardens, and that the literature of travel is at times the outcome of the occupation and at times the purely artistic creation which will in turn stimulate travellers to further and more varied exploits. More distant certainly is the connection between a love of gardening and one of the earliest forms of rustic literature which the age produces, namely, the pastoral, though it is probable that a reciprocal influence exists. In the case of that other practice of country life, the *Villeggiatura*, there are obvious modifications defined by the pastoral; the literary form suggests or intensifies

certain incidental qualities in the social habit. One remembers the practical imitations of d'Urfé's *L'Astrée* by the Hôtel de Rambouillet; the Marchioness and her friends conversing in the gardens in the guise of shepherds and nymphs and trying to revive in their own lives the physical aspect of the morality which they admired. And Tallemant quotes besides the example of Vauquelin des Yvetaux,[1] in the more limited sphere of his grounds in Paris, giving the same dramatization of the favourite idea. The shepherd convention must have played an important part in the pageantry of country-house amusements when the Hôtel de Rambouillet was in its best period.

The pastoral in its rise and development and in the hold that it gains on French literature, is one of the earliest manifestations for the love of country-life which had found satisfaction in the practice of the art of gardening and in the indulgence in walk and sojourn in the fields. We grant that the pastoral is generally an artificial form of expression practised by an artificial society, which either seeks to imitate an earlier literature through deference to fashion, or, dimly conscious of its own sterility, strives to reproduce the emotion whose existence its reason acknowledges, though its heart fails to understand. Yet any society which produces a pastoral literature must have in its being the germ of a love for the country, however unnatural or unoriginal the expression of its desires, since imitation of a quality is obviously the result of the initial possession of that quality combined with the desire for its cultivation, whether that cultivation be directly stimulated by

[1] Mentioned by Marsan in *La Pastorale Dramatique en France*, 1905. p. 314.

contemporary fashion, by a love of classical literature, or merely by a reactionary desire for peace and the contemplation of rustic life. Before examining the obvious artificiality of much of this *genre* we may definitely state that it does not necessarily proceed from a sentiment which is insincere. Though we may find the feeling for Nature limited in the pastoral, the very existence of the rustic drama and eclogue proves that the taste for country life is flourishing healthily in the first half of the century.

In this early part of the age the dream of the enchanted Eastern castle which in the sixties and seventies inspired men to realize an ideal kingdom through the practical form of gardening or by imagination in literature, appears in a simpler form. Sometimes in his own land, but at first more often in Cyprus or Arcady, where legend may play havoc with the local colour of harsh reality, the author finds his ideal valley and creates his shepherd lovers. Though the subject of this drama is inevitably human love, and the pastoral in this sense therefore in the direct line of classical tragedy, the purity and simplicity of classical thought are as yet undeveloped, and the mind deals with things as well as persons; in addition to the psychological drama which is the main spring of the play, the writer must have a setting which is a necessary adjunct, not only a back curtain; he must have the paraphernalia of a distinct landscape and class. Is the apparition of the pastoral a warning of the coming of classical drama, with its concentration on the pure idea? Possibly, for with all his accessories and his machinery, the pastoral writer is not forced to be inventive as regards his *décor*; he takes it ready-made, knowing that to his

readers, as to himself, his landscape and rustic society will be as familiar as the Palais de Justice to the audiences of Molière or Corneille.

As the pastoral develops we shall see that the taste for reality and precision increases, and thereby arises one of the curious paradoxes in literature. Increasing accuracy of local colour betokens an added interest in the details, at least, of pastoral life; the writer is more conscious of his environment; the reader has a clearer picture to view. But in an age which is before all things interested in mental activities, a concentration on the setting may lessen the value of the subject matter by distributing the interest of writer and reader; the drama may lose in unity of purpose and gain in artificiality because the interest is diverted from what is necessarily the main theme, and with the greater exactitude of detail may come an increasing lack of sincerity in the general treatment of the background. On the whole, however, we are inclined to believe that the pastoral undergoes the same evolution as the gardening art : a vagueness of atmosphere and confusion of incident give way to greater precision in the details as simplicity of thought and a sense of form develop; gradually the realist treatment of incidentals spreads to the essentials, and what is accidental in the framework crumbles away; from the *jardin-bibelot* proceeds the garden of Le Nôtre, from the pastoral drama proceeds the tragedy of Racine. In the second case the change is far greater, in so far as our subject is concerned, because the rustic element altogether disappears, since the pastoral, as such, is an accidental form of the drama, which fades when the critical faculty of the age is sufficiently awakened to perceive

the contradictions and difficulties of the *genre* as related to its own talent and mind.

Three important facts, therefore, proceed from this brief contemplation of the form. Firstly, that the pastoral drama is, by its very being, the proof of a liking for Nature in this age, however limited that liking may be, and secondly, that it is a specific form of a dream common to the greater part of society between 1560 and 1690—the dream of an ideal country, if not a Golden Age; finally that the form, as an example of the seventeenth century treatment of Nature, is not exceptional in its main characteristics and subsequent development. Certain facts, however, which concern the artificiality of the form are worthy of special attention.

The presence of Nature in the pastoral is naturally restricted by the laws that govern drama, even the free drama of the early years of the seventeenth century, before this type of play had submitted itself to the rules of the classical tragedy. The drama, by its very essence, is concentrated in its plot and action; there is less room for elaboration of *décor* of any kind than in the novel, and what setting there is must be suggested by the speeches of the characters, instead of by narrative. Now since, as we have said, the pastoral, like the classical tragedy, has for its object the expression and development of human aims and desires, its playwrights can ill spare the dialogue for matters of secondary importance, when their personnages need all their words to express the emotions which provoke, or are provoked by, certain situations. The pastoral is always, therefore, at conflict with itself; its aim is psychological and dramatic, its form is partly descriptive and is con-

stantly dependent upon narrative, which does not, as in the case of tragedy, further the progress of the action, but establishes the background before which the plot is enacted.

Were it not for the inherent artificiality of the *genre*, this conflict between the plot and the setting would disappear, or at least be reduced to a minimum. The author would concentrate on his plot and leave his setting to look after itself. But the pastoral which plays so large a part in the history of French drama between 1580 and 1640 is a foreigner on foreign soil. A product of Italy and of Spain, it has sprung up in France without the long acclimatization that years alone can give to the making of a national literary form, and it relies not on home traditions, which form an unconscious part of the great literature of any country, but upon deliberate imitations and adaptations. These give it a superficial brilliance and novelty, which fail to replace the sincerity of a work of art that is the growth of generations of feelings and ideas. The spectator of these plays has a strong impression of their patchwork nature, as he observes the setting, foreign in its adoption, grafted on to the subject-matter which is in reality national and traditional. Most pastorals are artificial in setting, the French pastoral, however, is doubly so ; it is artificial by its nature and artificially introduced into the literature of the country, and the result is often a want of true feeling in the presentation of Nature. The greatest writers who have not failed to produce a spirit of sincerity in the framework of their plays, are those who have failed dramatically in their work, because they have not realized, or have ignored, the inevitable conflict between the matter and

the form. Thus Racan, who is unquestionably a writer of great merit, has left an eclogue full of poetic inspiration and a spontaneous love of Nature, but the *Bergeries* are oddly shapeless and far more clumsily composed than many inferior plays. Perhaps the plan adopted by Frenicle shows a half-conscious attempt to solve the difficulty; dramatic in form, the *Eclogues* are yet much less restricted than the five-act drama, and the author may indulge more easily in the *complaints* which are the easiest and most harmonious expression of the pastoral idyll.

But the appreciation is not limited only by the artificiality of the setting. The pastoral, in descending from Spain and Italy, reproduces a common characteristic of the pastoral of those countries: namely the love of a complicated plot. As the years of the seventeenth century draw on, this quality fades and a greater simplicity takes its place, but in the height of its fame in France the *genre* is peculiar, like the tragi-comedy, for the entanglements of its action, and the peculiarity is fostered by the great French originators, d'Urfé and Hardy. In Rotrou's *Célimène*, for instance, Florante loves Filandre, who began by loving her, but transferred his affections to Célimène, while Célimène is wavering between Filandre, her new, and Alcidor, her old, lover. When Florante further complicates matters by disguising herself as a shepherd (Floridan), and provoking the love of Célimène, Félice (formerly in love with Lysis), and finally Filandre himself, it is obvious that the author has all he can do to straighten out the matter and rearrange his three pairs of friends, and that there will not be room in their conversations for anything but the most careless allusions to Nature; a fleeting refer-

ence to the " douce musique des oyseaux " or " ces beaux lieux " is all that the harassed lovers can manage. Similarly in Hardy's *Alphée*,[1] where Mélanie loves Euriale, who loves the Dryad, who loves the Satyr, who loves Corine, who loves Daphnis, who loves Alphée, there is little opportunity for Hardy to indulge in rhapsodies about the woods and fields.

Thus the seventeenth-century pastoral drama, straitened as it is by its essence and by its incidental qualities, provides comparatively little feeling for Nature. It is true that a heroic effort was made on the boards to assist the imagination of the audience by the presence of suitable scenery and *compartiments:* groves, fields, rocks and springs, a sheepcote and a cavern for the almost inevitable magician, etc., and the author did his part with suitable local colour pervading his piece; his shepherds are accompanied by mastiffs and his shepherdesses bear a crook; strains on the pipe reveal the presence of a hidden swain; frequently a lady's appearance is explained by her search for her missing sheep, or again a scene is conveniently closed by the sun's setting and the necessity of bringing back the sheep to the fold. The shade of the elms provides a retreat from the sun, the water is ready to bear up the drowning shepherd, whose fidelity has caused his self-sought death, or the trees to break his fall when despair casts him over a precipice, and the wolves of Arcady are always at hand to take the place of Thisbe's lion. But these incidents do not necessarily denote a real feeling

[1] It is true that in the pastoral of Hardy, the complication more often proceeds from the number of couples involved, not from any confusion in the main plot. However, from the point of view of the background and setting, the result is much the same; the author expends all his energies on the development of the different love interests in the plays.

for Nature; such things are often matters of convention and treated as such—to be introduced when necessity demands and afterwards speedily forgotten.

In *L'Astrée*, the forerunner of so many pastoral plays, we find something considerably above the general level in this respect. D'Urfé has some sense of the picturesque, the capacity for presenting the whole picture that he has in his mind, an almost geographical exactitude and a careful attention to detail. This realistic quality in *L'Astrée* is imitated by a fair proportion of the pastoral dramatists, and is one of the most interesting qualities of their Nature description, the writer using his setting for the purpose of glorifying the corner of land most familiar to his mind: what the Loire and Lignon are to d'Urfé, the Seine is to Rotrou and Frenicle[1] and the Clain to Bernier de la Brousse.[2] The French author is trying to naturalize his work, to transplant it from distant Arcady, Sicily, or Cyprus and make it a native of his own soil.[3]

Besides this attempt at real local colour there is often an inclination to provide the scene with something more personal and intimate than the regulation pipe, crook and flock. Philène in *La Sylvie* builds a green cabinet to shade his love, and throws a plank for her to cross the stream,[4] and the magician Gabalin of Bernier de la Brousse inhabits a cavern which is overgrown, not only with the hemlock, dear to pastoral enchanters, but with a host of other poisonous herbs, whose greater rarity lends a piquancy to the details of the scene. The introduction of hunting episodes is a common incident

[1] *Célimène*, 1637, and *Eclogue II.* (*Œuvres*, 1629).
[2] *Bergerie II.* *Œuvres Poétiques*, 1618.
[3] *Vide* Marsan: *La Pastorale Dramatique en France.* p. 316.
[4] I, 2.

in the pastoral, sometimes forming an integral part of the plot, as in Gombauld's *Amaranthe*, where the successful slayer of the stag is to be the winner of the heroine's hand, sometimes providing the author with a means of slyly introducing praises of the King.

The taste for localizing the scene increases with the progress of the age. In the pastorals preceding the *Bergeries* of Racan the inclination is to depend more on traditional setting and less on detailed observation. This inclination is no doubt partly due to the fact that the best period of the pastoral drama comes after the *Bergeries*,[1] and in the best plays we naturally find the details more interesting and more skilfully produced. At any rate the pastorals of this later period provide us with a greater reality in the setting ; the features of country-life bear more resemblance to the original; the scenes are more often probable, and sometimes even real. It is difficult to draw the same conclusion with regard to the characters. The shepherds of the French pastoral have so little relation with the shepherds of French society that it is not easy to find either in their ideas or speech a trace of reality. Marsan[2] mentions the analogy, from the point of view of style, between some of the burlesque parts and the valets of classical comedy. From *L'Amour Triomphant*[3] of Troterel and *La Sidère*[4] of René Bouchet he quotes passages which show that the speech used was that of polite society. The language of the pastoral, though it is sometimes below the level of the *salon* world, very rarely tries to

[1] Roughly between 1624 and 1631. *Vide* Marsan: *La Pastorale Dramatique en France*. p. 335.
[2] *La Pastorale Dramatique en France*. p. 321.
[3] 1615. IV. 1.
[4] 1609. IV. 5.

suggest the peasant whose surroundings it portrays. Nor have the ideas anything in common with his. There is a wide gulf between the shepherd of fancy and the shepherd of reality. The one obvious exception to the rule is Racan in the *Bergeries*. It may be claimed that Racan's shepherds are no more real than those of his contemporaries, but there is much in the nature of his characters that belongs more nearly to the rustic class. In his devotion to his subject in the reflection of the field life round Roche Racan, the poet has succeeded in forming a society which has at least some peasant attributes—the solid sense, energy and perspicacity of the middle-class fathers of Molière tinge the sayings of Damoclée; now by his poetic fancy and now by his prosaic common sense Racan brings the pastoral to a high level of imagination and exactitude.

For this prescribed setting the author has an affection which varies in accordance with the nature of the scene. If it is national and personally connected with himself, his sentiments are stronger than if it is merely traditional. But except in rare cases the fondness of his characters for their surroundings is not dissociated from their love of their own species. No creature in literature is more gregarious than the dweller in Arcady. His whole conception of Nature is as of a series of physical phenomena, not necessarily created specially for the use of mankind, for any such idea may not fit in with his religious philosophy, but certainly co-existing with and inferior to man and ready therefore to serve his superior intelligence. The sense of security and consequent expansiveness that characterizes the age as a whole in the literature of the great classics, and that is so striking in the broad display of the art of Le Nôtre,

with its lack of reticence coupled with rigid self-mastery, this expansive sense is beginning to be felt in the earliest dramatic form. Society is a unity, external Nature a part, but always a subsidiary part, of that unity. With very little of the modern self-consciousness in its ideal, and with no "moral aim," the seventeenth century realizes an effective brotherhood, the invincible clannishness of men of one class (be it shepherd or noble) with one aim, the pursuit of love. Therefore these men dwell together, confident in the security of their labours, their pleasures and their laws. Their self-control preserves a constant equanimity, since their excesses are the result of deliberate action rather than lack of resistance. They obtain their mental and physical satisfaction from their own species, and have no need to resort to God or Nature (except in a traditional manner), to provide them with spiritual companionship. Nor have they any need, in a general sense, to mask their hopes and fears with the shy or boastful timidity of a later age. The sense of concealment which Nature provides for the nineteenth century is useless in a world so penetrating in its knowledge of its fellows and itself. Therefore the feeling of unity with, or whole-hearted devotion to Nature, is rare. As is shown elsewhere,[1] a retreat into Nature in the pastoral is nearly always caused by disappointment in love; it proceeds from negative, not positive reasons. Beyond the traditional magician and the religious hermit or pagan seer, there is no member of this community who voluntarily lives a life of solitude, except, like Racan's Arthénice, for a very short time. Thus Amaranthe is unnatural when she refuses marriage and

[1] *Vide* Chapter VII.

protests: " J'ay le cœur dans les bois," and retribution comes in the shape of the menacing satyr, fear of whom swiftly converts her to forgiveness of Alexis and a more solid love of humanity.[1] The general attitude of the pastoral to one with " his heart in the woods " is that he is anti-social and, therefore, unnatural, and that Nature—often human Nature—will take vengeance on him. If a shepherdess finds herself separated from the genial company of her fellows, and alone with Nature, then the horror of solitude fills her with fears, and, like Racan's Clorise, she bitterly laments the silence and darkness; the more peaceful the wood, the more horrible is solitude to her mind:

" Je n'entends aucun bruit. Plus ce bois est paisible,
Et plus sa solitude est à mes sens horrible.
Ces autres ténébreux ne sont point sans danger ;
Je ne vois dans ces champs ny troupeau, ny berger,
J'ai perdu mon chemin, je ne trouve personne ;
La frayeur me saisit, toute chose m'étonne," etc.[2]

Or the shepherd Lucidas, losing his love and his position in his little society, sees the attractions of his pastoral life in their true proportion and all consolation fails. Like Clorise, he is untouched by the charms of Nature and solitude, and his lament is all for the social benefits that he has lost :

" Que me sert que mes bleds soient l'honneur des campagnes,
Que les vins à ruisseaux me coulent des montagnes,
Ny que me sert de voir les meilleurs mesnagers,
Admirer mes jardins, mes parcs et mes vergers,[3]
Ce n'est point en cela qu'est le contentement."

In this case it is the material advantages of the country

[1] Gombauld : *Amaranthe*, 1631. I. 3.
[2] Racan : *Bergeries*, 1618 or 1619. V. 3.
[3] *Bergeries*, V. 5.

that appear hollow to the afflicted shepherd. The idea of consolation and tranquility to be won from withdrawal into the heart of Nature evidently does not even enter his mind. The Amintas, the Céladons and the Alcidors of Arcady, if they lose their social ideal, lose everything. They appear then, stripped of their pastoral dress, disillusioned, embittered courtiers who have lost the favour of society. If, at such times, they retire into Nature, it is for a self-inflicted penance, symbolizing their unworthiness to live in the world of man, until they have redeemed their losses, *i.e.*, in most cases, reconquered their hard-hearted lovers.[1]

The magician, admittedly an unnatural, or rather a supernatural being, is almost the only member of Arcady who lives a life of solitude. He illustrates the darker side of Nature as it appears to this age. Gloomy rocks and caverns and poisonous plants form the dwelling where he works his spells, surrounded by demons who produce the crystals and magic mirrors which reveal the fate of the curious shepherds and their loves. But his very solitude makes him an object of fear among this pastoral folk. Akin to him in his withdrawal into Nature is the hermit, who appears far more rarely in these plays, and is a national creation rather than a traditional figure. Undoubtedly the Philothea of Saint François de Sales has helped to form him. The advice of the Bishop about physical as well as moral solitude made a very strong impression, as is shown by the line of Philothées who have stocked the earlier pastoral plays. Thus Racan's Philothée pre-

[1] Céladon in *L'Astrée*, Pyrandre in *L'Amour Triomphant*, etc. *Vide* Marsan : *La Pastorale Dramatique en France*. p. 317.

scribes a life of devotion in a " désert austère," a renunciation of possessions and desires and the practice of meditation, fasting, penitence and obedience. Here we have the purer, but rarer creation of the religious solitary; more often this rôle becomes the hermit, whose retreat is unexplained, and who exists obviously for the purpose of aiding the shepherds in their troubles —saving them from the wiles of the magician, revealing to them the truth of which they have lost sight. In either case his retreat is explained and excused by religious tradition; he is not necessarily supernatural, but avowedly above the common shepherd folk, who obey, but do not imitate him.

The attitude of the pastoral as a whole is, in fact, essentially prosaic. The country is a welcome relief from the troubles of the town:

> " Les Bergers de ces lieux sont d'illustres Héros
> Qui dans un sain azile ont cherché du repos,"[1]

sums up the feeling clearly enough. But it is not only a " sain azile " that the shepherds seek. In the seventeenth-century Arcady they do not only feed on love: a solid common sense and practicality govern their lives; therefore they appreciate the fertility of Nature, and her gifts form the subject of many passages: the wealth of the corn-harvest, the prospering flocks of sheep and the ripening vines provoke them to joy.[2] This last is indeed one of the commonest allusions to external Nature and one of the most sincere.

Otherwise Nature is to them the witness of their joys and griefs or the mirror of their love. The first

[1] Tristan L'Hermite: *Amaryllis*. I. 3.
[2] *See*, for instance, the chorus in Mairet's *Silvanire*. 1631.

instance exists in nearly every play, even in Hardy, whose pastorals contain very few allusions to external Nature at all. The age-old theme is revived by d'Urfé in innumerable stanzas in *L'Astrée*, where all the land surrounding the Lignon is called upon to bear witness to the love and sorrows of Céladon. When in despair it hears his lamentations, when happier moments come, he exhorts it to join in his happiness:

> " Ayez part à mon heur comme à tant de misères."[1]

Likewise Thélame,[2] Grinand,[3] Arthénice[4] and even the Satyrs[5] confide in Nature their hopes and fears. Or frequently the shepherd makes of Nature the reflection of his love. The brightness, the flowers of Nature are the smiles of the lady; the breeze pauses to listen to her voice, the nightingales sing to give pleasure to her ears.

> " Bref il est assuré que tout ce paysage
> N'a d'embellissement que de ton beau visage."[6]

In this case the joys of Nature exist for her alone; without her Nature is void. Sometimes the expression is milder and the poet contents himself with drawing parallels between the beauties of the scene and his lady's face.

The contrary provides a similar, but less common example. Bare rocks and precipices and the dashing mountain torrent are the symbols of suffering when the

[1] Part II, Bk. 9.
[2] Mairet: *La Silvie*, 1633. III, 3.
[3] Montchrétien: *Bergerie*, I. 2. 1601.
[4] Racan: *Bergeries*. I. 3.
[5] François Ménard: *Pastorale*. II, 4. *Œuvres*. 1613.
[6] Mairet: *La Silvie*. I, 5.

hero has lost his hope and is wandering disconsolate through the wilderness:

" Ces vieux Rochers tous nuds glissans en précipice,
Ces chutes en Torrent froissez de mille sauts,
Ces sommets plus neigeux, et ces monts les plus hauts
Ne sont que les pourtraits de mon cruel supplice."

So Céladon, when he journeys through the mountains lamenting the loss of Astrée.[1] At other times the same idea is expressed, not through the mind and imagination of the characters themselves, but in a more direct and definite form. Collirée weeping for Daphné on the banks of the Seine, perceives that the meadows are dressed in mourning for his departure, that their colours are less bright.

" ou le mal que j'endure
Pour le moins de la sorte à mes yeux le figure,"

adds the cautious nymph. But when, worn out with wailing, she lies fainting in the Bois de Boulogne, the narrative takes up the tale; the sheep find no more savour in the sweet thyme and bleat sadly in sympathy with the affliction of their mistress:

" Cependant ses brebis à la merci des loups
Au thin qu'elles paissoient ne trouvaient rien de doux
Et bêlant, ce sembloit, avec de la tristesse
Plaignoient l'affliction de leur belle maîtresse."[2]

Thus is Nature strictly subordinated to the human interest in the greater number of these plays.

It must not be concluded, however, that the subordination of external Nature excludes all appreciation.

[1] Part II, Bk. X.
[2] Frenicle: *Eclogue*. II. *Œuvres*. 1629.

The passages in which the poet finds analogies for the charms of his mistress are productive of much graceful and harmonious verse. Nature may not be of paramount importance, but she is at least worthy to be compared with the rarest of all beauties, a proof in itself that she is not without charm. And when he is expatiating on the fertility of Nature, the pastoral poet not infrequently rises to a high standard of verse, as in the pleasant lines spoken by Florestan, Prince of Candia, when he sets foot on the island of Sicily after his shipwreck:

> "Que ce climat est doux, et que ce beau païs
> En sa diversité tient mes yeux esbahis
> Tantost comme les flots m'ont mis sur le rivage
> Je croyais estre à bord de quelque Isle sauvage,
> Mais à ce que je voy cette terre féconde
> Doit en fertilité n'avoir point de seconde,
> Ces guérets semblent dire à ces coutaux voisins,
> Vous voyez nos espis, monstrez nous vos raisins ;
> Que l'œil se plaise à voir le long rang de montagnes
> Qui fait une couronne à ces belles campagnes.
> S'il faut s'en rapporter au jugement des yeux
> Je croy que c'est ici la demeure des Dieux,
> Car je ne pense pas qu'un si beau païsage
> Ait jamais été peint pour le mortel usage."[1]

And the Prince proceeds to demonstrate his theory by seeking a shady grove by the murmuring waters, where he falls asleep in preparation for his labours to break the spell which separates the shepherdess and the King's son.

The renewal of life at the coming of Spring is a popular theme of pastoral verse, though here again the idea is often closely linked with the thought that

[1] Mairet: *La Sylvie*, V. 1.

all joy fails where the affections are not satisfied. But Spring comes and Nature takes on new life ; woods, fields and animals acquire a fresh vitality and offer to man an invitation to do likewise. "Quand les prez rient, et damassent leur sein d'une agréable verdure," writes Bernier de la Brousse in the *Première Bergerie*, "les bois prennent leurs habillemens printaniers, les oyseaux sur les Ormes dégoisent à qui mieux mieux; que les eaux sourdement murmurantes, à doux replis argentez serpentent ça et là par les preries, et que Phœbus donne vigueur aux plantes et aux hommes: les Pasteurs et les Bergères sont invitez de mener joyeuse vie . . ." The vision is a popular one with this robust age, which rejoices in the display of energy in Nature at the turn of the year. The shepherd sees in each individual manifestation of Nature a reminder and an example of his love: the swallow builds beneath the eaves; the sun rises earlier and sets late; the buds burst on the trees; and in these common acts, rare details in a description which usually consists of generalities, the poet sees an invitation to man to renew his life. The unwilling shepherdess and laggard swain are urged to follow Nature and enjoy their own youth in the youth of the year. Frequently, when there is a chorus, it is they to whom the expression of these sentiments is entrusted, otherwise the hero himself exhorts his lady to observe Nature and follow her example. Sometimes, indeed, he is so persistent as to weary the lady to whom his suit is addressed. There is a note of caustic humour in the interruption of Alphée when her patience is exhausted with the enumerations of Daphnis on the manifestations of love in spring-time, incidentally one of the rare and represent-

ative passages of Nature description in Hardy's work:

DAPHNIS. Donc n'as-tu veu (rustique passe-temps)
S'entrebaiser les tourtres au printemps,
Les oisillons sous l'obscur des ramées
Voler après leurs femelles aymées;
Donc n'as-tu veu les taureaux négliger
Es prez herbus le boire et le manger.
Donc n'as-tu veu les passereaux mignards.
ALPHÉE. Holà, pasteur, ces exemples suffisent,
Qui néantmoins de rien plus ne m'instruisent.[1]

Such then is the rôle of Nature for the pastoral poet; she is the giver of life and increase and the frame and setting for the gallantry of the age. He does not ascribe to her a personality, though he sometimes endows her individual forms with life, introducing the spirits of her rivers in the guise of nymphs and bearded deities. Yet it would seem that the enchanter typifies the darker aspect of Nature, and that the satyr symbolizes her purely animal side,[2] or at best her indifferent irresponsibility towards mankind.[3] The attitude towards external Nature in this literature is therefore essentially practical, and somewhat lacking in imagination.

The sites chosen by our poets are often, as we have seen, local and real, but even where this is not the case the landscape often has the familiar features of France. The spot chosen is usually an open plain, sheltered by hills, well-wooded and watered by one river at least. Pasture land is there in abundance for the sheep, fields

[1] *Alphée*, I. 1.
[2] *Cf.* the rôle of the Satyr in most pastorals.
[3] Of such a nature is the interesting character of the shepherd Hylas in *L'Astrée*.

for the corn and slopes for the vines. Sometimes, but rarely, there is a garden. Often the scene is laid on an island, the traditional Sicily or Cyprus popularizing this choice of place. It is notable how repellent mountainous districts are to the mind. The shepherds never dwell among mountains; they enter them only as a penance for some fault, or as a result of despair. Among rocks and torrents they are ill at ease; such scenery is to them symbolical of pain; they have no conception of beauty among mountains, which are to them a prison at the best, at the worst an active source of danger. Mountains then form a decidedly small and unattractive part of pastoral scenery. In *L'Astrée*, though the journey of Céladon in the mountains covers a fairly large space, there is very little variety in the details of the description. D'Urfé lavishes all his powers on the painting of the plains of the Lignon; his hills are a mass of rocks, precipices, snow-topped peaks, and torrents, which lack individuality. In the majority of plays mountains are not mentioned at all.

Little remains to be said of Racan after M. Arnould's book, yet it is impossible to leave the subject of the pastoral without special mention of his name. For it is in the *Bergeries* that we find, not only superior poetry, but a sincere and intimate love of Nature which is rare in the pastoral as a whole. The dedicatory letter to Malherbe[1] gives us the keynote to the work, when, speaking of his solitary retreat, he says : " J'y jouis d'un repos aussi calme que celui des anges; j'y suis roi de mes passions aussi bien que de mon village; j'y règne paisiblement dans un royaume qui est une

[1] 15 janvier, 1625.

fois aussi grand que le diocèse de l'évèque de Bethleem . . ." Thus an atmosphere of calm pervades the *Bergeries;* one is conscious that the description is personal, not merely traditional. Here we find, besides the original episode of the religious retreat,[1] an interest in human labour which recalls on a very small scale the incident of the *Laboureurs* in Jocelyn:

"Que le soleil est haut! Déjà de ces collines
L'ombre ne s'étend plus dans les plaines voisines;
Déjà les laboureurs, lassés de leurs travaux,
Tous suants et poudreux, emmènent leurs chevaux,
Déjà tous les bergers se reposent à l'ombre,
Et, pour se festoyer des mets en petit nombre
Que la peine et la faim leur font trouver si doux,
Font servir au besoin de table à leurs genoux;
Les oiseaux, assoupis, la tête dans la plume
Cessent de nous conter l'amour qui les consume;
L'air est partout si clair qu'il défend à nos yeux
D'admirer les saphirs dont il pare les cieux.
Le soleil trop à plomb nous voit sur ce rivage:
Il nous faut retirer et nous mettre à l'ombrage
De ce bocage épais, où l'on dirait qu'Amour
A voulu marier la Nuit avec le Jour."[2]

We have quoted the passage in full since it illustrates the superiority of Racan's description to that of the majority of his contemporaries. The heavy atmosphere of mid-day that pervades the lines, and the few details in the description of the ploughmen all show the writer's interest in his subject and his desire not to present a traditional setting, but a familiar scene. Elsewhere it is the "beaux champs plantureux" on the banks of the Seine that Lucidas describes,[3] not without a complimentary allusion to the royal palaces that they hold,

[1] *Vide* page 92. [2] II, 5. [3] II, 5.

or the animated scene of the flood which has devastated the land. Here and there a note of colour adds a picturesque touch to the landscape:

> " J'ouvre et hausse la vue, et ne vois rien paraître
> Que l'ombre de la nuit, dont la noire pâleur
> Peint les champs et les prés d'une même couleur."

Or an observation of sound:

> " Les Coqs ne chantent point, je n'entends aucun bruit,
> Sinon quelques Zéphirs qui le long de la plaine
> Vont cajolant tout bas les Nymphes de la Seine."[1]

And there is a true pathos in the complaint of Arthénice which far exceeds the stereotyped lament of many a shepherdess:

> " Petits oiseaux des bois, que vous êtes heureux
> De plaindre librement vos tourments amoureux!
> Les vallons, les rochers, les forêts et les plaines
> Savent également vos plaisirs et vos peines."[2]

a commonplace idea in pastoral poetry, but here expressed in an original manner.

It is hardly necessary to quote the well-known lines of Alcidor in praise of the country and pastoral life.[3] The theme is Virgilian and a favourite one with Racan, treated already in his *Stances sur la Retraite*.[4] Once more the poet makes his familiar statements personal and peculiar to himself by fixing the scene with the introduction of real place names. Of " pastoral " local colour there is comparatively little in the *Bergeries*.

[1] I, 1. [2] I, 3. [3] V, 1.
[4] About 1618 according to M. Arnould.

In one instance indeed Racan recalls his traditions and says:

> " Afin de ne point perdre un temps si favorable
> Je vais faire sortir mes brebis de l'étable,"

but usually he has little regard for this convention; he is content to provide the atmosphere. and has, in fact, no need for external local colour. The whole background of the *Bergeries* is the country that Racan himself knew, reproduced without self-consciousness or effort.[1]

With the exception then of Racan and a half-dozen other writers,[2] the appreciation of Nature in the pastoral drama is small, and submitted to convention rather than feeling. But it must be remembered that none of the great dramatists attempted the pastoral. By the time that Corneille was constructing the *Cid* the height of the pastoral fever had passed; tragi-comedy had taken its place, and even the popularity of tragi-comedy was on the wane. Racine, therefore, whose talent was sufficiently lyric and elegiac to have enabled him to produce drama of this kind, was writing at a date when it was a thing of the past and the ideals of classical tragedy exclude the possibility of the presence of external Nature.

We have not attempted, in this brief survey of the feeling for Nature in the pastoral drama, to trace in outline the sources of the *genre* nor its progress in France. An exhaustive study of the subject can be

[1] M. Arnould has analysed in detail the " poésie rurale " in the *Bergeries*. *Vide Un Gentilhomme de Lettres au XVIIe siècle*. 1901. pp. 225–233.

[2] We would suggest Montchrétien, Mairet, Bernier de la Brousse, and Paul Ferry, at least.

found in the work of M. Marsan, already quoted above, together with a catalogue of the plays that have been preserved. Yet even a complete historical account of the origin of a literary form does not answer the question as to why those particular influences prevailed at that given moment. As we have already said,[1] we are inclined to regard the pastoral as a particular manifestation of the Utopian dream which recurs continually in the literature of every land.

[1] *Vide* page 81.

CHAPTER IV

The Pastoral Ideal

II: ROMANCE, ECLOGUE AND IDYLL

The eclogues and idylls owe much to the work of Desportes, the influence of whose ode, *Sur les plaisirs de la Vie rustique*, was felt by Racan in the composition of the *Stances sur la Retraite*.[1] The censure of Malherbe has blinded posterity to much that is good in the *Bergeries*, in which group Desportes collects most of his Nature poetry, either in sonnet or more irregular form. The background is not always "pastoral" in the sense that it consists of the conventional setting; sometimes the writer simply describes a familiar scene and expresses his feelings directly without the shepherd medium. Besides helping to form the tradition of pure rustic poetry, Desportes popularizes the mourning shepherdess theme. The shepherd who sighs

> "Ces monts, ces prez, ces eaux, ces rochers et ces bois,
> Sont lassez de respondre aux accens de ma voix
> Enrouée et cassée"[2]

finds many an echo in the following age, until the

[1] *Vide* M. Arnould: *Un Gentilhomme de Lettres au XVIIe siècle*, pp. 125–128. Racan had studied the Ode, "O bien heureux qui peut passer sa vie," in the collection of Nature poetry published by Lucas Breyer in 1583.

[2] *Complainte.*

reader feels inclined to agree with the despairing shepherds and to wish that unfortunate Nature were not made the confidant of so many woes.[1]

The pastoral lyric then is well established before the days of Racan and Frenicle. At one time in the groves of Arcady, as a shepherd, peaceful and picturesque ; at another on a fairy island, as a knight of chivalry, rather less peaceful, but still more heroic and picturesque, as the age loses its longing for peace and feels the stir of warlike deed, or again, with the growing love of travel, as a wanderer over unknown continents among savage tribes, the seventeenth-century hero satisfies his desire for romance, for incident and variety and for beauty, perhaps also his taste for accomplishing, in imagination, the exploits that prosaic fact has in reality denied. But a dream is an unsubstantial thing, ill-adapted for compression into a set form : the dream of Arcadian bliss, however stereotyped and conventional the form in which it appears, proceeds from an undefined longing for some more satisfactory state of existence in the immediate present, and therein are mingled man's love for his own species, his love of God and his love of Nature. The pastoral, in its dramatic form, is familiar and ready to hand, yet much of this sentiment overflows more naturally into the lyric poetry of the age. Even after the coming of Malherbe, the ode, the elegy and the eclogue have considerable freedom of form, nor is the matter troubled by the inward struggle between the rival merits of

[1] Boileau's " Lines in the style of Chapelain " bear witness to the popularity of this theme in the seventeenth century :

" Droits et roides rochers dont peu tendre est la cime,
De mon flamboyant cœur l'âpre état vous savez
Savez aussi, durs bois, par les hivers lavés,
Qu'holocauste est mon cœur pour un front magnanime."

setting and subject, as in the drama:[1] no exigencies of the stage restrain the writer's emotions or restrict his style, and he has the time-honoured models of Virgil and Horace to provide suggestions where imagination fails. It is small wonder, therefore, that the pastoral ideal is best attained in the idylls, eclogues, *complaints* and *bergeries* that form a considerable part of the work of such writers as Desportes and Maynard, or in the lyric episodes in the drama of Racan, or in the famous prose romance which has so large a share in the formation of the pastoral genre, the *Astrée* of Honoré d'Urfé.

Three classes of non-dramatic pastoral contain the purest expression of the pastoral ideal of the age: firstly, the prose romance of *Astrée*; secondly, a group of poems which generally retain the shepherd convention and which generally have, in addition, an elegiac note of regret or lament coupled with an affection for external Nature; and thirdly the simple rustic poetry, in direct imitation of Horace and Virgil, such as the *Ode* of Desportes and the *Stances* of Racan; these last form a small, but very important class.[2]

One of the most obvious qualities of the treatment of Nature in d'Urfé is his attention to detail. Moreover, he imparts to his scenery something characteristic, new and national in his portrayal of a real landscape: "Auprès de l'ancienne ville de Lyon, du costé du Soleil couchant, il y a un pays nommé Forests, qui en sa petitesse contient ce qui est de plus rare au reste des Gaules: car estant divisé en plaines et en montagnes

[1] *Vide* Chapter III.

[2] In his analysis of the *Stances* of Racan, M. Arnould points out that Racan is one of the very small group of "rustic" poets in French literature. *Vide Un Gentilhomme de Lettres au XVIIe siècle.* p. 118.

les unes et les autres sont si fertiles et situées en un air si tempéré, que la terre y est capable de tout ce que peut désirer le Laboureur. Au cœur du pays est le plus beau de la plaine, ceinte, comme d'une forte muraille des monts assez voisins, et arrousée du Fleuve de Loire, qui, prenant sa source assez près de là, passe presque par le milieu non point encore trop enflé ny orgueilleux, mais doux et paisible. Plusieurs autres ruisseaux en divers lieux la vont baignant de leurs claires ondes; mais l'un des plus beaux est Lignon, qui vagabond en son cours, aussi bien que douteux en sa source, va serpentant par cette plaine depuis les hautes montagnes de Cervières et de Chalmasel, jusques à Feurs, où Loire, le recevant, et lui faisant perdre son nom propre, l'emporte pour tribut à l'Océan."[1]

Elsewhere there is the same precision in d'Urfé, which gives to his descriptions the photographic interest of reality even where they lack imagination; the grove, where Climanthe prepares for his deception of the nymphs, the island reached by stepping-stones described by Céladon in his disguise as Alexis, the source of the river of Sorgues, whence rises the spirit of the stream in the form of an old man, and many other places. D'Urfé's prose has a certain harmonious quality which combines well with the affection for his country that prompts some of the best of his descriptive passages. M. Marsan[2] points out that the rustic idyll really forms a very small part of *L'Astrée* and that d'Urfé has not sufficient delicacy to sustain it for longer. The descriptions that we have mentioned, however, proceed from a sincere affection for the country, and the idyll,

[1] *L'Astrée*: Pt. I, Bk. 1.
[2] *La Pastorale Dramatique en France.*

which is denied to the book as a whole, finds an expression in the detail. Thus we have throughout *L'Astrée* a series of little rustic pictures: Bellinde watching her reflection in the waters of the Lignon,[1] Celion sporting with his trained ram in the meadow,[2] Damon bathing in the Lignon[3] or playing his flute beneath an oak in the fields.[4] The last two are given deliberately as pictures, but the others represent a long series of graceful little sketches interspersed in the narrative of the romance. But d'Urfé does not by any means confine himself to the portrayal of the brighter side of Nature; in fact he specializes in the storms and tempests which are suited to the martial age in which he lived. The fury of the lightning makes a strong appeal in his work. A terrific storm overtakes the travellers returning from the source of the Sorgues;[5] blinding rain drenches the friend of Lucindor as he journeys from Lyon;[6] Astreé and Diane, taking refuge in a grotto, fear that the rage of the elements will destroy their fortress; they see the little Lignon rising in flood and vying with the Loire in force.[7] The climax is perhaps reached with the storm that bursts after the battle of lions and unicorns at the end;[8] black darkness reigns, and the very scent of the flowers is turned to the fœtid odour of sulphur. Nor does d'Urfé ever hesitate to represent the discomforts and inconveniences that Nature may cause. The rhapsodizing Silvandre pricks his legs on the brambles and stumbles over roots in the treacherous moonlight;[9] Alcidon, in spite of all his fervour, is

[1] Pt. I, Bk. 10.
[2] Pt. I, Bk. 10.
[3] Pt. I, Bk. 11, Troisième Tableau.
[4] Pt. I, Bk. 11, Tableau Premier.
[5] Pt. III, Bk. 3.
[6] Pt. V, Bk. 3.
[7] Pt. V, Bk. 8.
[8] Pt. V, Bk. 11.
[9] Pt. II, Bk. 2.

soaked by rain on his journey to and from his mysterious isle ;[1] Mellandre, more unfortunate still, retains one impression of her journey from Great Britain—a two days' illness resulting from the Channel crossing.[2] These are trivial details in themselves, but they remove d'Urfé to a great distance from the conventional painter of pastoral Nature. They give a touch of individuality and reality to the book.

There is occasionally, too, a trace of humour in the writer's attitude to his " pastoral " frame. Sometimes his lovers openly masquerade as sons of the soil, and that with a self-consciousness that is wholly convincing. Lindamor, to gain audience of Léonide, disguises himself as the gardener, and so effects an entrance into the gardens. But he is more used to fighting than to working the land, and he carries his spade like a lance. Moreover, he is overwhelmed by shame at appearing before his mistress in such guise. With such amusing incidents d'Urfé succeeds in giving life to his book.[3] Yet he misses frequent opportunities of indulging in description which would not be out of place. The fair gardens of Montbrison only give him occasion to create a setting for the gallantries of Lindamor, Galatée and Fleurial.

The theme so popular among the pastoral dramatists, the return of Spring, inspires d'Urfé on more than one occasion, but not perhaps in his best passages. The following sonnet of Lucindor represents d'Urfé in this mood; it is commonplace in idea, but harmonious in form. A curious detail is the interest of the fishes in the return of Spring. Have we here a parallel to the fishes of Saint-Amant watching the passage of the

[1] Pt. III, Bk. 3. [2] Pt. I, Bk. 12. [3] Pt. I, Bk. 9.

Israelites through the Red Sea? Was Boileau perhaps rather hard on a writer who belonged to a generation for which fishes were possibly a more important and more picturesque element in natural life than in 1674?

" Enfin ce long hyver a calmé ses orages,
Les Zéphirs du Printemps annoncent le retour,
Les Bergers amoureux dansent sous les ombrages
Au chant de mille oyseaux qui se parlent d'Amour.
Le froid et la pasleur ont quitté nos visages,
Et mesme les poissons dans l'humide séjour
Admirent les œillets, qui dessus nos rivages
Naissent quand le Soleil y fait naistre le jour.
Ainsi je vois qu'en l'air, sur la terre, et dans l'onde
Les oyseaux, les poissons, et le reste du monde
Tirent quelque plaisir d'un si doux changement.
Moy seul infortuné, je meurs loing de Florice,
Rendez-la moy, grands Dieux, est-ce un trait de justice
Que ma seule douleur dure éternellement? "[1]

The sense of seclusion and solitude is strong in *L'Astrée*, witness the enchanted isle at the end of the Valley of Vaucluse at the source of the river Sorgues: " Le lieu où je fus conduit, estoit bien l'un des plus solitaires de toute cette contrée . . . du bout de cette vallée, (Vaucluse) et sous les pieds de certains grands et épouventables rochers, sous une fontaine merveilleuse, qui donne commencement à la rivière de Sorgues, qui, fort peu loing de là se séparant en deux bras, fait comme une petite isle, où est située la maison où je devois aller, et qui pour estre assise entre ces deux ruisseaux, et environnée de leurs claires ondes, a prise le nom de l'Isle. Le lieu d'où cette fontaine sort, est à la vérité pour la solitude en quelque sorte vénérable, mais un peu horrible pour les rochers qui y sont tout à

[1] Pt. V, Bk. 4.

l'entour, et pour ce fort peu fréquentée des personnes ";[1] or the description of the little temple sacred to the gods Hesus, Thautates and Tharamis: " Au devant de l'entrée il y avoit un petit pré de la largeur de trente pas, ou environ, qui estoit tout environné de bois de trois costez, de sorte qu'il ne pouvoit estre apperçeu que l'on n'y fust. Une belle fontaine qui prenoit sa source tout contre la porte du Temple, au plustost cabinet, serpentoit par l'un des costez, et l'abreuvoit si bien, que l'herbe fraische et espaisse rendoit ce lieu très agréable. De tout temps ce boccage avoit esté sacré au grand Hesus, Thautates et Tharamis."[2]

But nowhere does d'Urfé excel more than in his moonlight scenes. With all his practical sense the author of *L'Astrée* has created a worthy tradition for the moonlight descriptions of the nineteenth century; sometimes even there is a hint of the sympathy which seventeenth-century Nature usually denies to man: " Et comme si le temps en eust eu plus de compassion que moy, les brouillards se dissipèrent, et la Lune qui s'approchait alors de son plain, parut si belle, qu'elle fit naistre un nouveau jour malgré les ténèbres où son esprit estoit enveloppé." Thus speaks Lucindor's mistress as she watches the departure of her rejected lover.[3] Finally we may quote the passage describing the journey of Silvandre straying through the forest to meditate upon his love : " Le lieu solitaire, le silence, et l'agréable lumière de cette nuit, eussent esté cause que le Berger eust longuement continué, et son promenoir, et le doux entretien de ses pensées, sans que s'estant enfoncé dans le plus épais du bois, il perdit en partie la clarté de la Lune qui estoit empeschée par ses

[1] Pt. III, Bk. 3. [2] Pt. II, Bk. 5. [3] Pt. V, Bk. 4.

branches, et par les fueilles des arbres . . ." Later on he perceives two men in the distance: " Il vid bien toutes fois à leurs habits, que l'un estoit Druyde, et l'autre Berger. Ils estoient assis sous un antre qui abreuvoit ses racines dans la claire onde d'une fontaine, de qui le doux murmure et la frescheur les avoit conviez à passer en ce lieu une partie de la nuict."[1]

Thus d'Urfé provides us with a type of description which has sincerity, accuracy, some originality and not a little poetry. He is, admittedly, largely responsible for the attempt to link the *décor* of the pastoral to a particular spot, but the value of his picturesque scenes has been somewhat overshadowed by the immensity of his form and the importance of the human interest.

The freedom from restraint of form which enables d'Urfé to indulge his taste for natural description, gives to the eclogue also the liberty that the drama lacks. Sometimes with a glitter of *précieux* wit, sometimes with a tender, mourning note, the pastoral lyric expresses now the vision of an Arcadian existence in the fields of France, now the simple desire for country life and its companion pleasures. This class of verse belongs mainly to the first period of the age, and is not very large. The eight Eclogues[2] which comprise the *Seconde Bergerie* of Bernier de la Brousse are all dialogues excepting the last, which is a lament: *Les Regrets de Phyllis*. Partly narrative, partly idyllic, this poetry is a mixture of *précieux* style in the manner of Théophile,[3] heroic passages in the *Astrée* tradition and

[1] Pt. II, Bk. 2.
[2] *Œuvres Poétiques*, Poictiers, 1618.
[3] " Tu as, vaillant Chrestien, tu as perdu ma race,
Ton fer rougist encor du sang pourpré des miens."
Seconde Bergerie. Eclogue IV.

lines of really harmonious verse. Hunting episodes, magicians, echoes and all the common-places of the pastoral drama are collected in the two *Bergeries*, the first of which has part of its narrative in prose. At this stage the form has more convention and less originality than it obtains a little later, but *Les Regrets de Phyllis* furnish us not only with some of the poet's best work, but with an example of the bereaved shepherd theme which distinguishes many of the finer lyrics of the age. The gentle, elegiac note of the mourning swain or deserted nymph provides a practical, intelligible subject which is full of poetry, external Nature giving the setting which befits the tender, melancholy theme. No better example can be found than the lines which conclude the regrets of Phyllis at the death of Alexis in the *VIII Eclogue* of Bernier de la Brousse:

" Elle eut dit: Et soudain les Chesnes et les Pins
Du lieu de son esmoy les plus proches voisins,
Par un doux branslement accordèrent sa plainte,
Et aux vents, parmi l'air, la donnèrent sans feintes:
Jettant avec leur bruit, sourdement glacieux,
Un jus donne-sommeil sur le jour de ses yeux:
Et son corps oppressé de ceste ardente envie,
S'estendit sur le fraiz comme s'il fust sans vie."[1]

A more simple writer of the Eclogue is Nicolas Frenicle, with his intention to " please and profit "[2] those who love the form. Frenicle keeps the shepherd convention, carefully justifying his allusions to a society which " renews the memory of false Gods adored by the pagans "; " Sa matière est innocente, j'en ai banni les impiétez," he says complacently. Therefore the

[1] *Les Regrets de Phyllis.*
[2] Preface to the Eclogues. *Œuvres.* Paris, 1629.

innocent life of the shepherd folk forms his main theme : Aminta,[1] who was contemplating a song of war, is moved in a vision to sing of love, and at his awakening Venus triumphs over Mars in the composition of fifteen eclogues; the beauty and virtue of the swain, the innocence and fidelity of his mistress, the triumph of love and the peaceful joys of the country are expounded in this pleasant, harmonious verse. The spirit of *L'Astrée* pervades the whole of this eulogy of the Seine and the Bois de Boulogne; the verses possess a gentle melancholy which is not without charm; Nature is of secondary importance, it is true, for the love of episode takes the first place, but the sentiment is sincere and the descriptive touches neat without being too commonplace. An original note on the subject of hunting is struck in the *VIII Eclogue*, where Ergaste exclaims:

> " Délices de mes yeux, beau lieu, je te saluë;
> Qu'on ne trouve jamais ta verdure polluë
> Au carnage des cerfs qui chercheront ces eaux,
> Et qu'ici nul que moi n'ameine ses troupeaux. "

But such characteristic details are not found in great variety or number, and are chiefly confined to the work of the best writers: a comparatively small group. At other moments, a touch of Christian piety mingles not unpleasantly with the pagan ideal; the devout labourer is enjoined to trust in Heaven in times of trouble as in times of peace.[2]

In the *Eclogues Spirituelles* of Antoine Godeau, Bishop of Grasse, however, there is a much more distinctly pious note, which gives considerable origin-

[1] *Eclogues. Songe.* [2] *Eclogue VI.*

ality to the theme. Here the shepherd is dissuaded from the worship of Venus and definitely christianized. He sings of the glories of the countryside in order to illustrate the wonders of the Christian religion. We have in turn the shepherd who resolves to forsake his sheep in order to become a spiritual shepherd of a different flock,[1] the shepherd Alcidon who forsakes his earthly love to devote his life to religion,[2] Alexis who returns from the temptations of court life to worship God in the fields,[3] and so on throughout the fifteen poems. The dialogue is held between the newly-converted shepherd and his reluctant friend, who sometimes yields, half-convinced, to the eloquence of the proselyte, and sometimes, doubtless acting as a symbol of worldly criticism, remains unpersuaded and perverse. The Eclogues are full of the influence of the " Délices de Mantoue " as the writer calls Virgil,[4] the feeling for Nature is sincere, and not lacking in imagination, especially in those passages where Godeau turns it to the hymn of praise of the Universe, which is his main theme. This grafting of the Christian on to the pagan theme is a not uncommon incident in an age which is peculiarly successful in forcing its own dominant personality on to the material that it happens to employ.

The simpler type of rustic poetry, which frequently overlaps the preceding group when it contains either the pastoral convention or the elegiac note, is distinguished by its direct appeal to Nature and praise of the benefits of a country life. This group, and to a

[1] Eclogue IX of the *Poésies Chrestiennes; Nouvelle édition revue et augmentée.* Paris, 1646.
[2] Eclogue X. [3] Eclogue XI. [4] Eclogue XI.

certain extent indeed all pastoral poetry in France, owes its origin to the Georgics of Virgil and the poems of Horace, household works of the period of the Renaissance, as is shown by the frequent translations, from that time onward; the imitations of the Georgics in the seventeenth century bear additional witness to the admiration felt for this kind of agricultural poetry, as well as for the information and practical good sense of the work. The motif of the "Beatus ille" of Horace[1] and the "O fortunatos nimium . . . agricolas" of Virgil[2] runs through most of the drama of the first thirty years of the seventeenth century, and through many lyrics of the time, while its plaintive notes sound frequently in the works of the great classics. The pastoral poets of antiquity: Virgil, Theocritus, Calpurnius and their like, provided an important source of inspiration to our seventeenth-century writers.[3]

Although these poems reveal a true love of Nature, it is, in many cases, the love of the town-dweller for the country, not the intimate affection of a country-man for his natural surroundings; moreover, the central interest of most of this poetry is a human one; the weary statesman withdraws for a time from public life; he retreats to his olive groves or his Sabine farm and there, among his kinsfolk and labourers, he spends the days in ploughing, harvesting and vintaging, living a life of physical toil combined with quiet of the mind. Such was the ideal of Desportes to a certain extent in the

[1] *Epode* 2.

[2] *Georgics*. Lib. II. Possibly also *Culex*: O bona Pastoris, etc.

[3] There is an interesting passage in the *Mémoires* of Michel de Marolles, describing the harvest of his country home in 1655. The writer, then aged nine, took part with the other children in the work; the ladies of the family repaired to the fields to watch the progress of the labour. The scene recalls the grape-gathering at Clarens, described by Rousseau. (Vol. I of the edition of 1656–57).

Ode, such the desire of Racan in the *Stances sur la Retraite*, and such, in his sonnets, the dream of Maynard, who in four or five poems treats the classical theme. There is less description in Maynard than in Desportes or Racan. The personal disillusionment that saddened his later life forms an important part of the subject, but there is a positive love of the country as well as the desire to escape from town-life, whether the writer is rejoicing in his retreat or lamenting over his imprisonment in the capital. Maynard is less precious in his style than Desportes, and more direct; a naïve note of pride in his withdrawal from Paris is often heard:

> " Que j'aime ces forests ! Que j'y vy doucement !
> Qu'en un siècle troublé j'y dors en asseurance !
> Qu'au declin de mes ans j'y rêve heureusement;
> Et que j'y fay des vers qui plairont à la France !
> Depuis que le village est toutes mes amours,
> Je remplis mon papier de tant de belles choses,
> Qu'on verra les sçavans après mes derniers jours
> Honorer mon tombeau de larmes et de roses.
> Ils diront qu' Apollon m'a souvent visité,
> Et que pour ce désert les Muses ont quitté
> Les fleurs de leur montagne, et l'argent de leur onde;
> Ils diront qu'esloigné de la pompe des Rois,
> Je voulus me cacher souz l'ombrage des bois
> Pour montrer mon esprit à tous les yeux du Monde."[1]

It is characteristic of Maynard's manner that the personal note is very strong and that the pastoral is of the slightest, but after all, Maynard was among the disciples of Malherbe, to whom clarity and simplicity were everything. Therefore Maynard obtains his

[1] *Vide* also the Sonnets : " Je donne à mon désert les restes de ma vie " ; " Déserts où j'ai vécu dans un calme si doux " ; and " Adieu Paris, adieu pour la dernière fois," etc.

effect in surprisingly few words, and the first three lines are sufficient to show us a poet whose love of the country was not perhaps inborn, but certainly most sincerely acquired, and who found in the cultivation of his tulips and his melons consolation for the withdrawal of public favour.

The lyric, therefore, does not provide us with much novelty as regards the general treatment of Nature in the pastoral. There is, however, much greater freedom of expression, and, on the whole, a greater sincerity of thought and feeling than in the drama. Moreover, if there is a certain lack of colour in this type of literature, there is in compensation a more imaginative appreciation of the gifts that Nature has to bestow than in the more vividly descriptive poems where a sense of the picturesque forms a more important feature.

CHAPTER V

THE SENSE OF THE PICTURESQUE

The sense of colour and sound, which is so important a quality of nineteenth-century descriptive literature, naturally plays in the seventeenth century a comparatively small part. Yet it is in this respect, perhaps, more than in all others that the age has been misjudged. It is natural that the literature of second and third rank should be overshadowed by the great classical works, but it is regrettable that the appreciation of colour, which centres in these lesser poems, should thereby be ignored. It is rash to draw general conclusions from examples which are rather scattered and diverse, but, roughly speaking, a study of this element in the seventeenth century suggests the following facts: firstly, that the pre-classical period, when the Hôtel de Rambouillet was at its best,[1] yields a great number of instances of the picturesque both as regards colour and form; secondly, that between 1640 and 1660[2] the picturesque plays a fairly important part: the hard glitter of the *précieux* poetry is fading, but some appreciation of colour remains; thirdly, that the classical period is somewhat barren as far as this quality is concerned, and lastly, that throughout the age the sense of the picturesque is gradually waning and, as the century

[1] Approximately about 1630.
[2] These dates are necessarily very rough.

advances, colour steadily disappears, giving place to form. Nor is this conclusion an unexpected one. We have seen the sense of form slowly developing in the gardens of the time and replacing the elaborate brilliance of the sixteenth-century style and the passion for design prevailing over the taste for subtlety and surface glitter; Nature is losing her personality of bewildering variety in colour and shape and adopting the austere simplicity of the classical line. Hence we find that in the earlier period the elements in Nature which make the strongest appeal are those which directly touch the sense of colour: precious stones, fruits, various manifestations of water, and of the elements: the rainbow, the moon and the sun. Whereas in the later period a more sober range of subjects prevails: the bird and animal kingdom, the sea and the woods. These last, as in the art of Le Nôtre, are a continual source of inspiration, by reason of the infinite variety of shape that they offer, both as masses and as separate trees. Moreover, as the age advances, the picturesque, which is at first linked to gallantry and wit, is combined with an earnest reflection upon the present existence and ultimate destiny of man. The artist begins to use his sensations to reveal the realist details of man's material life, or he employs them to illustrate his philosophy of life and sometimes, but very rarely, he describes them for their own sake, devoting himself to the sole enjoyment of the external aspects of Nature. It is only with the ultimate centralization of the literary ideal in the study of man that the picturesque is eliminated in the art and literature of the age.

We may first briefly consider the vast collection of lyric poetry, produced during the first half of the

seventeenth century, to which we may give the title of "poésies galantes," and in which we see a queer, distorted view of external Nature, kaleidoscopic patches of jewellery and flowers that paint for the author the beauties of his lady's face. Here the rose and the lily blossom most frequently among the flowers, vying with the carnation in perfection of colour and form; the amaranth portrays the undying quality of the lady's charms,[1] the jasmine is less sweet than her breath, and the dews of dawn less brilliant than her tears.[2] Rose, pansy, and lily of the valley strive with the bitter herbs at her feasts, and the poppy watches over her slumbers[3] —in a word, all Nature joins to do her honour and to sing her praises. Such praise is the subject of the *Guirlande de Julie*, composed by the admirers of Madame de Rambouillet, the *Hymne de la Pudeur* of Le Père le Moine, and innumerable others, whose distinguishing characteristics are their epigrammatic neatness of expression and their adaptation of Nature to the requirements of gallantry.

At other times the poet extracts from his subject the essence of light and colour to form his elegant word picture, whose brevity in no way interferes with the subtlety of his design, as in these lines of *Le Parnasse* of Georges de Scudéry where vegetable and mineral forms are strewn together with the elaborate carelessness that is a feature of *précieux* art:

> "Là, mille fleurs émaillées,
> Où rit la rosée en pleurs,
> Sont sur leurs tiges mouillées
> Des astres et non des fleurs.

[1] M. de Marbeuf: *L'Amaranthe. Œuvres Poétiques.* 1619.
[2] Tristan l'Hermite: *Le Promenoir des Deux Amants*, etc.
[3] Tristan l'Hermite: *La Comédie des Fleurs.* Between 1640 and 1645.

La tulipe variante,
Et l'anémone riante;
La topaze, l'améthiste,
Le jaspe à la couleur triste,
Les coquilles, le cristal,
La nacre et l'ambre superbe
Sur des rochers au lieu d'herbe
Ont des branches de coral."

It would be difficult to say whether the flower or the precious stone takes precedence in this class of poetry; in each case it is one intrinsic quality of the object that makes its appeal: the hardness of the diamond, the brightness of the pearl, the glow of the rose or the perfume of the musk, and in each instance this quality is obvious and commonplace; moreover, it is of secondary value in the poem, and appears as an analogy only, not as the principal subject matter.

Again, Nature may figure largely in the enigmatic form of verse that serves to tickle the brains of high society, and here also the human element predominates, though frequently in veiled form. The *Rose* of the much abused Abbé Cotin provides us with an excellent example of this artificial style with its allegorical bearing:

" Comme Pallas, je suis armée;
J'ai le manteau de pourpre et la couronne d'or;
Le Soleil a tous yeux estalle mon thrésor
Et partout les zéphirs portent ma renommée.

Sous le bandeau d'azur des cieux
Naissent mes beautés souveraines;
On les voit s'eslever sur la teste des reynes,
Mais n'en murmurez point: je suis du sang des dieux."

The same cleverness and superficiality distinguishes a large proportion of the chansons, madrigals and

rondeaux of the time. Sometimes a pathetic note is struck: the short life of natural things as an analogy with the briefness of human life or love.

" Roses, en qui je vois paroître
Un éclat si vif et si doux,
Vous mourrez bientost: mais, peut-être,
Je doy mourir plus tost que vous.

La mort que mon âme redoute
Peut m'arriver incessamment:
Vous mourrez en un jour, sans doute,
Et moy peut-être en un moment."[1]

Or a lighter note pervades the lines and the reader is far more conscious of the poet's desire to please and amuse, than of the sufferings that he describes:

" Petits ruisseaux, confidents de ma plainte,
Roulez tousiours,
Vous roulez moins que les amours
D'Aminte.

Herbes et fleurs, dont cette rive est peinte,
Changez tousiours,
Vous changez moins que les amours
D'Aminte."[2]

But all these poems are examples of a very limited feeling for Nature, even though the Nature element is present in them all. They are, in varying degrees, but without exception, artificial. In nearly every case the human element predominates, and they are for the most part love lyrics. Such examples of external Nature as they contain are noted neither for their rarity nor their interest, which is not surprising when we con-

[1] Jacques Cassagnes. Probably between 1660 and 1670.
[2] Pierre Perrin: *Paroles de Musique*. *c.* 1670.

sider that this literature is mainly the product of skilled craftsmen with a low standard of imagination and originality. Therefore among the flowers the rose, lily and carnation reappear incessantly and the landscape is a wearisome stretch of shady groves and murmuring streams, where an everlasting zephyr breathes of spring, and an Arcadian pair feasts on nectar and ambrosia in the foreground, while a comfortable phalanx of sheep drink milk and honey in the middle distance. It is beyond our scope to inquire into the very real merits of much of this refined verse; we are for the moment only concerned with the fact that it is not here that we must look for the best Nature poetry. Nevertheless, in the tinselled brightness of the frequenters of the Hôtel de Rambouillet we perceive an appreciation of the light and colour of Nature's forms. The carnation and rose have neither the mysterious personality, nor the delicate intimacy of the flowers of a more sentimental and modern age, but they have colour and a radiance which is not without variety. In this poetry the feeling for Nature is mainly limited to similes and images borrowed from the forms which are most familiar in social life, forms which in themselves are restricted in size and endowed with that superficial elegance that characterizes the mentality of the *salons*. Observation is confined to obvious qualities and to externals only; natural images are used as the pre-classical gardeners used shells to form a grotto, creating from these fantastic, coloured shapes a monument of delicate pedantry.

The relation between external Nature and the senses is more varied in the poetry which comes outside this first category, though less interesting than in the

nineteenth century. Landscape consists mainly of a mass of forms; colour is somewhat commonplace; the range is small and the shades rather crude. Scent is rare, except in very stereotyped forms; the rose, lily, carnations and jasmine are allowed a perfume and the better-known herbs: lavender, musk, marjoram and thyme. The all-pervading smell arising from Saint-Amant's melon comes as a relief to the senses wearied with the lily and the rose. Taste is practically non-existent, except in the semi-comic poetry of Auvray and Saint-Amant.

On the whole the sense of sound seems to be relatively the best developed. It is evident that in the pastoral, at least, there will be a good deal of convention, the murmuring of the breezes and the water, the sweet song of the birds, etc. But there is a great deal more detail than this, and a surprising amount of variety in the sound heard. Obviously a comparison of the number of sound observations with those of colour in the same poem will often show a preponderance of the last, but that is because in literature in general a sense of colour is far more common than a sense of sound. Relatively sound seems to make more appeal than colour, whether it be the gradation of sounds made by the sea, from the roar of the wind to complete silence,[1] or the varied range of woodland noises,[2] or even the din of Paris streets.[3] Where colour is in obvious preponderance it takes, as in *précieux* poetry, the form of light. In literature, as in painting, light and the effects of light hold an important place.

[1] *Cf.* Tristan l'Hermite : *La Mer*, etc. *La Lyre*, 1641.
[2] *Cf.* Desportes : *Chanson*, etc.
[3] Boileau : *Satire VI*, etc.

Except therefore in some isolated cases the sense of colour and sound is not very highly developed in this age. In the former instance especially, there is a lack of variety and originality which distinguishes the writers of Louis XIV. from their predecessors and descendants. But though their sensations are somewhat crude, they are capable of appreciating many of the different natural forms which have provided the substance of poetry at all times: Summer and Spring, the fields, woods, waters, sun and moonlight and the sea. In the classical period the sun is naturally a very common source of inspiration, partly because it belongs to that cheerful and normal aspect of life that appeals to this vigorous generation, partly because its presence encourages the fertility of Nature, which is a popular subject, and partly again because of the allegorical significance attached to it through the emblem of Louis XIV. The sun and the seasons with which it is associated in Northern France play an important part in the picturesque literature of the day.

It is also, with other natural forms, used as a symbol of the Creator. Bossuet, in the *Elévations sur les Mystères*, gives us a description of the rainbow as a picture of the clemency of God, and in another case draws a parallel between the light proceeding from the sun and the Person of the Son of God. In both instances the picturesque forms an important part of the simile. In the *Traité sur la concupiscence* (Ch. 32) we find the same method of glorifying the Creator through the aspects of Nature, this time in a more detailed description of the sunrise:

" Le soleil s'avançait, et son approche se faisait connaître par une céleste blancheur qui se répandait

de tous côtés; les étoiles étaient disparues, et la lune s'était levée avec son croissant, d'un argent si beau et si vif que les yeux en étaient charmés. Elle semblait vouloir honorer le soleil en paraissant claire et illuminée par le côté qu'elle tournait vers lui; tout le reste était obscur et ténébreux, et un petit demi-cercle recevait seulement dans cet endroit-là un ravissant éclat par les rayons du soleil, comme du père de la lumière. . . . A mesure qu'il approchait je la voyais disparaître; le faible croissant diminuait peu à peu, et quand le soleil se put montrer tout entier, sa pâle et débile lumière, s'évanouissant, se perdait dans celle du grand astre qui paraissait, dans laquelle elle fut comme absorbée."

Though it is rare to find appreciation of winter in an age when this season is only indicative of wet and cold, there are a few poets who can take pleasure in its beauties. The later eighteenth century brings with it the discovery of mountains from an artistic point of view, and therewith the deliberate quest of winter scenery in the height of summer and the appreciation of the beauty of ice and snow, but naturally such feelings are unknown in the preceding age. Yet a few poets have made the discovery independently of tradition ; among them Bussières, who sees in snow a symbol of chastity, but combines with his moral an admiration of the " white flower of the skies ":

" Douce laine du ciel, blanche fleur des Nuées,
Beaux lys, jonchant l'azur de feuilles argentées!
Ah! tout l'air est remply de Papillons perlez,
Partout on voit blanchir des phantômes ailez!
Comme leur danse est belle, et comme leur albastre
Virevolte par l'air, roulant d'un pas folastre! "[1]

[1] From *Descriptions Poétiques*. 1641.

And Saint-Amant, whose varying subjects are a continual source of surprise:

" Ces atômes de feu qui sur la neige brillent,
Ces estincelles d'or, d'azur et de crystal,
Dont l'hyver, au soleil, d'un lustre oriental
Pare ses cheveux blancs que les vents esparpillent,

Ce beau cotton du ciel de quoy les monts s'habillent,
Ce pavé transparent fait du second métal,
Et cet air net et sain, propre à l'esprit vital
Sont si doux à mes yeux que d'aise ils en pétillent.

Cette saison me plaist, j'en ayme la froideur;
Sa robe d'innocence et de pure candeur
Couvre en quelques façons les crimes de la terre.

Aussi l'Olympien la voit d'un front humain;
Sa collère l'espargne, et jamais le tonnerre
Pour désoler ses jours ne partit de sa main."[1]

With his usual originality Saint-Amant gives a new significance to the commonplace symbol of the tenth line and the concluding fancy is a curiously modern idea. The poem is perhaps the most interesting on the subject, combining, as it does, originality of thought with artistic admiration of external beauty.

Night and dawn play a fairly large part in the subjects chosen, and here again Saint-Amant furnishes us with an interesting specimen, a mixture of the poetic aspect of night and its more realistic and material signs:

" Paisible et solitaire Nuit
Sans lune et sans estoilles,
Renferme le jour qui me nuit
Dans tes plus sombres voilles "

[1] *L'Hiver des Alpes.* Between 1640 and 1660.

is the introduction to a brief description of the howling cats, shivering children and barking dogs that frequent the gutters of a big town. With the majority of poets, however, night is merely the hour of rest, or the time when the lover reflects on the unhappy or fortunate course of his affections. Sometimes night inspires a brief picture of the appearance of material things in darkness, as in the *Promenades de Richelieu*, or in the *Chanson* of Desportes, but the " paysage lunaire," has not yet come into its own, and a certain proportion of these poets are inclined to regard night merely as a period of cessation from the activities of the day, just as they regard winter in the same negative spirit. There is more pleasure in dawn than in night, partly because it is the temper of the age to welcome the renewal of life and energy, partly, no doubt, because of the literary tradition in France created by such poems as " Mignon, allons voir si la rose," etc., which give us the *Matin* of Théophile de Viau.

Of all the different aspects of Nature woods certainly have the largest share, and provoke the most sincere and the least conventional of pictures. Sometimes it is the forest as a whole, or again some particular grove, or sometimes it is the individual tree: the oak, elm or willow most commonly, or the birch, alder, larch, etc. The laurel and myrtle naturally appear for historical reasons, and the blackthorn in accordance with the tradition established by the *Pléïade*. But woods as a whole are more popular than the individual tree, and the instances of detailed descriptions of a tree, even in the pastoral, are comparatively rare. Fields and meadows form an essential part of most natural setting, as has already been seen in the pastoral, but

they are as often taken for granted as lavishly described.[1] Water in its various forms recurs often; we have seen how d'Urfé popularized river and stream, and the intimate affection for a spring is to be expected from a generation familiar with Horace. The following passage from *Moïse sauvé*[2] of Saint-Amant is an excellent example of such a pastoral scene, ordinary enough in its features, but harmonious in outline and sound:

> "Le fleuve est un étang qui dort au pied des palmes,
> De qui l'ombre plongée au fond des ondes calmes
> Sans agitation semble se rafraîchir
> Et de fruits naturels le cristal enrichir;
> Le firmament s'y voit, l'astre du jour s'y roule:
> Il s'admire, il éclate dans ce miroir qui coule
> Et les hôtes de l'air, en ce miroir divers,
> Volant d'un bord à l'autre, y nagent à l'envers . . .
> . . . . . le son
> De mille rossignols perchés sur les buissons
> Où, faisant retentir leur douce violence,
> Ils rendent le bruit même agréable au silence."

The sea is far less common as an object of poetry; naturally it was little familiar to most men at this time, and then mostly through books rather than personal experience, except for those who for diplomatic or military reasons had been forced to make its acquaintance. Yet the sea is much less neglected than one would think at first: Tristan l'Hermite gives us a complete Ode bearing the title *La Mer*, in which he attempts to paint every mood of the water from calm to great storm; sunset and sunrise on the waves, the pebble-strewn beach where the poor fishermen search

[1] There are a number of descriptions to be found in Bernier de la Brousse: *Les Amours de Thisbée*, etc. *Œuvres Poétiques*, 1618.

[2] End of *Sixième Partie*.

for treasures, and finally the sudden calm that may succeed the most violent agitation of the waves. There is no mistaking the reverent admiration of the opening lines, as the poet contemplates the spectacle before him and considers the waters in their varying moods:

> " Nul plaisir ne me peut toucher
> Fors celuy de m'aller coucher
> Sur le gazon d'une falaise
> Où mon dueil se laissant charmer
> Me laisse rêver à mon aise
> Sur la majesté de la Mer."

Nor his horror of the brutality of the sea, nor his quaint conception of its sense of justice in the middle of such ferocity, since it steadfastly returns to the land the treasures that it has stolen. Not unlike *La Mer* is the Eclogue of Sarasin.[1] The sea with its immensity and its dangers forms the principal subject; descriptions of storm and calm interspersed with personal memories of his love and the lament of her loss, almost Lamartinian in their tone. But the details in Sarasin are more minute and more practical than in Tristan l'Hermite: he gives the equipment of the fisherman, his reed and wicker baskets, his nets and his seines, his rod and the shells that the maidens collect on the beach when the tide is low. Later he speaks of the pilot with his compass, of the heavy whales like floating islands, and the idle seals asleep near the ships, and lastly of the occupations of the sailors at sea:

> " Parmi nous, agissant en diverses manières,
> Les uns tournent les buis en figures grossières,
> Et font, pendant le temps que dure leur loisir,
> Des meubles pour l'usage ou bien pour le plaisir;

[1] *Myrtil ou le Nautonnier. La Lyre*, 1641.

Les autres, plus dévots, demandent à la troupe
Des dieux conservateurs qui brillent sur la poupe,
Que pour nous l'Océan soit toujours appaisé,
Et le vent favorable, et le retour aisé.
D'autres, vaguant les feux de la voûte Ethérée
Tiennent les instruments dont elle est mesurée."

More detailed still is Georges de Scudéry, in his account of fishing for the tunny with a dart, the dory with a line, or innumerable little coloured fish with nets. This kind of realist descriptive verse forms an important section of that dealing with the sea.

The greatest impression left by the sea, however, remains its dangers for men. Even those poets who have enjoyed the account of its wonders and works dwell on the sea as a destroying force, and the allusions to its horrors are common and seem more familiar than its beauties to the ordinary man. So we find Tristan L'Hermite, Sarasin, Montplaisir, and many others insisting on the perils of the sea, using it as the symbol of ungovernable force and unending destruction.

The attitude towards mountains is unchanged in this period of the seventeenth century. In poetry, as in the pastoral, they appear very little, and then only as an object of fear, or as an obstacle to the attainment of some desire. From a literary and artistic point of view, the mountain is as yet undiscovered.

Flowers do not figure very largely at this date except in a conventional form, and fruit is mainly confined to Auvray and Saint-Amant. *Le Melon* is not only the equivalent of a drinking song in the eating line. The observation of colour and light in the wine sparkling in the glass and the green rind covered with the " mille plaisans chiffres d'amour " show an appreciation which

is not purely gastronomic. But the peculiarities of Saint-Amant are rare and the examples here are confined to individual cases.[1]

The animal kingdom, however, is important. Enough has been said of the sheep and its enemy the wolf, or it may be the lion, and the fable writers are following a special tradition of their own. Otherwise the four-legged animal is rare, though we meet an occasional pet cat or dog forming the subject of a gallant verse. Tristan l'Hermite in his *Orphée* gives a long list of the trees, animals and birds that followed the player in complete harmony with one another :

> " L'indomptable éléphant dans cette attention
> Près du rhinocéros n'a point d'émotion," etc.

but his prosaic phraseology constitutes little more than a catalogue. On the other hand, birds are common enough in poetry, whether of the roitelet-fauvette type of gallantry between Pellisson and Mlle. de Scudéry, or the nightingale and swallow of antiquity. The subject is common, but not rich in interest, since there is little freedom from convention here.

It is natural to find that the bee has its part in poetry. It is to Pierre Perrin that we owe a long didactic poem on the bee[2] in imitation of Virgil, but Perrin goes further than his master and includes in his stanzas not only the bee, but six other insects. The stanzas are written in the form of Eclogues, says the author, to avoid the awkwardness of bearing their own unpolished name, since the insects are little known

[1] It is natural to find that the grape, and therewith the vineyard, appears frequently. The glories of the vineyard are sung in a good many drinking songs of the period.

[2] 1661.

among "les Dames et les Cavaliers, pour qui la Poésie doit à mon avis travailler principalement."[1] The poems, then, are dialogues between a shepherd and a shepherdess, the conventional background softening the didactic nature of the instruction and providing a familiar setting. The style is prosaic, but the moral lessons that the poet draws from his subject are original enough; the butterfly is no longer the symbol of idleness but in its independence an example to man, since it is its own heir, without parents or nurse, and its own destroyer without injustice. But still more surprising is his apologia of the flea; this insect, he says, strikes without malice and for self-preservation only, unlike vindictive man, and its strength and agility are certain signs of its divinity! The silk-worm, the ant, the cricket and the midge complete the category and provide a small insect collection which seems to be unique. This group was the trial trip of the poet at the age of twenty, so he tells us, and his design was to write in verse the natural history of a few insects—a history which should be both "plaisante et curieuse." Perrin understands by verse "le stile du vers . . . avec les ornements et les enjouements que demande la Poésie, laquelle, n'estant qu'un jeu de discours veut folastrer toujours et ne souffre point le dogmatique, quoy que de sa nature divertissant, s'il n'est enveloppé et comme confondu ou dans le Pathétique, ou dans le plaisant et le familier." The manner of his writing, therefore, corresponds to his conception of poetry and his insect verses, though interesting, have few lyric qualities.

We have already shown that the sun is a common source of inspiration. Of the other natural phenomena

[1] *Au Lecteur.*

perhaps the rainbow is the most popular: it is admired in one or two pastorals and inspired a neat little verse in Guillaume Colletet:

> "Sourcil au front du firmament,
> Frange d'or de son vestement,
> Doux souris qu'il mesle à ses larmes,
> Arc d'émeraude et de saphir,
> Si la pompe te plaist, elle a pour moi des charmes
> Plus que Zéphir pour Flore, ou Flore pour Zéphir."

It does not seem, however, to have given rise to very much verse, nor to very profound reflection, or lyric enthusiasm. Rain is a less common subject; rain, like snow or darkness, is an obstacle to the pursuit of daily occupations, a necessary evil, which is sometimes railed at, but more often ignored. The one interesting poem is *La Pluye* by Saint-Amant, who sees in rain a bringer of good to the shrivelled earth and a source of life and health:

> "Sus, que tout le monde s'enfuye!
> Je voy de loing venir la pluye,
> Le ciel est noir de bout en bout,
> Et ses influences bénignes
> Vont tant verser d'eau sur les vignes
> Que nous n'en boirons point du tout."[1]

Some space is given to the rainbow and cloud which accompany the storm and to the pleasant sound of the rain on the leaves. Saint-Amant rejoices in the storm as an expression of the energy of Nature, but his chief interest is to note the effect of the deluge on man, which

[1] Either consciously or unconsciously the poet has made frequent use of the rhyme in "i." *Cf. La Pluie* of Verhaeren and the onomatopoetic use to which this rhyme sound is put.

he renders in a series of short passages giving the visual impression:

" Regarde a l'abry de ces saules
Un pélerin qui se tapit:
Le degoust perce ses épaules,
Mais il n'en a point de despit.
Contemple un peu dans cette allée
Thibaust, à la mine hastée,
Marcher froidement par compas;
Le bonhomme sent telle joye
Qu'encore que cette eau le noye
Si ne s'en ostera-t-il pas.

Voy de là dans cette campagne
Ces vignerons, tout transportez
Sauter comme genêts d'Espagne,
Se démenant de tous costez;
Entends d'icy les domestiques
Entrecouper leurs chants rustiques
D'un fréquent battement de mains;
Tous les cœurs s'en espanouissent,
Et les bestes s'en resjouissent,
Aussi bien comme les humains."

This exuberance is characteristic of Saint-Amant, but it is also a very fair example of the attitude of his age towards Nature, a healthy rejoicing in the force she displays; it is unusual to meet this quality with regard to rain, of course, but it is the habitual feeling of man for the brighter side of Nature's manifestations.

There is a final instance of an unusual expression of a feeling for Nature in some isolated poems of Jean Auvray. This writer, like Théophile Gautier, shows us Nature in poetry through the medium of art. His *Tableau de l'Aurore*, his *Midy d'Esté*, and his *Tableau de la Nuiet*,[1] are not the work of a trained artist, as in

[1] Before 1633.

the case of Gautier, nor do they resemble the later writer in style. His manner is much more diffuse than Gautier's, and it has not the same simplicity and devotion to the subject. Auvray mingles with his description of the picture praise of his friends and " jeux de mots." It is noteworthy that even in this kind of description Auvray does not confine himself to form and colour alone; he lays stress upon the movement in the scenes, and even in two cases on the suggestion of sound. His poems are the reverse of scientific criticism, for his own feelings and taste bubble up through his observations, but it is a curious example of the amalgamation of the two arts that properly belongs to the time of Diderot.

CHAPTER VI

THE PERSONAL RELATION BETWEEN NATURE AND MAN

The idea of union and communion between man and Nature, which is so common a characteristic in the nineteenth century, is very rarely found in the classical period. Nature is, to the classic, a concrete thing, a setting and background for his own activities or, at most, a landscape upon which he looks with pleasure. It has for him no personality of its own; he does not attribute to it an attitude of friendliness or hostility; he simply does not consider it from this point of view at all. It is true that he will call upon it to retain the memory of his loves, like Racine in his *Stances à Parthénice*,[1] or he will beg it to witness his misfortune or his happiness, like Racan in the *Stances sur la Retraite*, but this is an old convention, not peculiar to this age, and far removed from the exchange of sympathy between Nature and man which belongs to a later period. The instances of an interchange of sympathy between Nature and human beings or the fact of a man's mood being modified or defined by his natural surroundings are so rare that it is difficult to draw very satisfactory conclusions from their presence. The personal rela-

[1] "Vous qui n'avez point vu l'illustre Parthénice,
Bois, fontaines, rochers, agréable séjour
Souffrez que jusqu'ici son beau nom retentisse,
Et n'oubliez jamais sa gloire et mon amour."

tion between man and Nature that is one of the charms of Lamartine's poetry and provides us, in Vigny, with a curious instance of morbid fearfulness, is unknown here. Its absence makes the Nature poetry of the age barren when compared with Romanticism, where it flourishes with all the vigour of an overnourished plant. It is not altogether without reason that posterity has accused the seventeenth century of being deficient in imagination towards Nature. Only one notable exception to this rule seems to exist, that of Balzac, particularly in his letter to M. de la Motte Aigron, written in September, 1622. Here the writer describes a valley which had hitherto been known to no one: " Je descends aussi quelquefois," he observes, " dans cette vallée qui est la plus secrète partie de mon désert et qui jusques-ici n'avoit été connue de personne. C'est un pays à souhaiter et à peindre, que j'ai choisi pour vaquer à mes plus chères occupations et passer les plus douces heures de ma vie. L'eau et les arbres ne le laissent jamais manquer de frais et de vert. Les cygnes, qui couvraient autrefois toute la rivière, se sont retirés en ce lieu de sûreté et vivent dans un canal qui fait rêver les plus grands parleurs aussitôt qu'ils s'en approchent, et au bord duquel je suis toujours heureux, soit que je sois joyeux, soit que je sois triste." Here we have the spirit of *rêverie* which supersedes the very art of conversation itself, as the author meditates, not without malice, on his talkative friends; we have the strangely modern note in the last sentence, showing the happiness in grief which is Romantic rather than Classical, the feeling of security and secrecy, the intimate knowledge and perception of detail, the sense of mystery and discovery and the joy of possession. The conclusion

might have been written by Rousseau himself: " Mes désirs, mes craintes et mes espérances, cessent tout d'un coup: tous les mouvements de mon âme se relâchent . . . Mais comme c'est moi qui ai découvert cette nouvelle terre, aussi je la possède sans compagnon, et je n'en voudrois pas faire part à mon propre frère . . ."[1] Only the ecstasy falls short of the lyric outbursts of Rousseau; Balzac is more restrained and more matter-of-fact.[2]

The fact is that the attitude to Nature is, as we have said, rather matter-of-fact, at least in the majority of cases. This generation is clear-sighted, without pessimism, expectant of good without undue idealism. With its practical intelligence it knows what it wants; its energy and determination enable it to gain its ends. Thus its feeling for Nature is symbolic of its outlook on life as a whole. It asks from her what it believes she can give, and is content. The Romantic, like a child, cries for the moon; the Classic supplies himself with a lamp. The Romantic entreats from Nature a sympathy surpassing that of man or rails at her hostility; the Classic adapts to his own uses the good things that she offers and seeks no further. His Nature poetry, therefore, is light, even-tempered and, on the whole, cheerful, either with the pleasant gravity of Racan or the gay liveliness of La Fontaine. Sometimes he is facetious, like Le Marquis de Vauvert, a friend of Saint-Amant. Perhaps it is hardly reasonable to include

[1] *Cf.* Rousseau : 3e lettre à M. de Malesherbe : " . . . Alors, l'esprit perdu dans cette immensité, je ne pensais pas, je ne raisonnais pas, je ne philosophais pas . . ." and " J'allais alors d'un pas plus tranquille chercher . . . quelque asile où je pusse croire avoir pénétré le premier, et où nul tiers importun ne vînt s'interposer entre la nature et moi."

[2] The instance in Balzac is not a single one. The same sentiments recur to a lesser degree in letters to M. de Bois-Robert, M. de la Motte-Aigron, etc. *Vide* also *Le Prince* XVIII.

in the category of Nature poetry such examples as *L'Orange* and *L'Ail*, though surely the Marquis is alone in his attempt to make garlic, "the carnation of the Gascon border," a subject for poetry. *L'Huytre* is a typical example of this humorous verse, which is really a species of drinking song, in the manner of Saint-Amant:

"Toy qui te ris de la tempeste,
Vivant rocher, enfant de l'eau,
Qui nais captif dans un tombeau,
Où tu vis sans cœur et sans teste,
Aveugle esclave de Thétis.

Délice de nos appétits,
Huistre, fuy la plaine liquide;
Viens dans la pompe d'un festin,
Quitte cet élément perfide.
Et, puisqu'il faut mourir, meurs plustost dans le vin."

The cynicism and irresponsibility are reminiscent of the Saint-Amant group of drinking poets; but the Marquis is not only a drinker; he is an eater, too, and an enthusiastic one. His attitude towards Nature is profoundly practical: for better, for worse, she provides him with something to eat.

Yet even in this age there are examples of a different feeling for Nature, or at least for certain natural forms. Here and there among the poets we find instances of a more sober frame of mind, and even at times of a dim conception of the relation that may exist between Nature and man. We have already stated elsewhere that mountains form no part of the setting of lyric poetry; the pastoral drama follows here a general rule. With a few exceptions there is no mention of mountains in the literature of this age, but where they appear

they are, as in the drama, the background for grief and despair:

> " Maintenant loin de vous et de ces doux rivages,
> Parmi des monts affreux et des roches sauvages,
> Où de noires Forests de pins audacieux
> Croissent parmy la neige, et s'eslevant aux cieux,
> Je consume en regrets les nuits et les journées . . ."

writes Sarasin in an Eclogue, therein expressing the opinion of the time, and in *La Chartreuse* the mountains are to Perrin the seat of isolation and fear. The fear of mountains is greater than that of the more familiar sea. It is true that both these aspects of Nature are comparatively unknown ground in the seventeenth century; it is also worth remembering that man at this date is bent upon acquiring power over Nature; over the sea he has gained a little by the use of ships, over the high Alps he has as yet gained none at all, and he feels a resentment and unwilling respect in consequence.

Imagination is not always wanting, though it is naturally rarer at this date than in the Rousseau period; in the theme of solitude,[1] so popular in this poetry, we find ample instances of this fact. But apart from that, unexpected examples often occur in this somewhat matter-of-fact age. We find, for instance, Tristan l'Hermite likening a flower reflected in the pool to the dreams of the sleeping water, and endowing his oaks with a personality and a capacity for suffering, while his woods are silent but for Diana's horn:

> " L'ombre de cette fleur vermeille
> Et celle de ces joncs pendans
> Paroissent estre la dedans
> Les songes de l'eau qui sommeille.

[1] *Vide* Chapter VII.

Dans ce bois ny dans ces montagnes
Jamais chasseur ne vint encor;
Si quelqu'un y sonne du cor,
C'est Diane avec ses compagnes.

Ce vieux chesne a des marques saintes;
Sans doute qui le couperoit
Le sang chaud en découleroit
Et l'arbre pousseroit des plaintes."[1]

And on another occasion the poet describes darkness in a wood full of horrors which are not all material: the wet twigs brush his face, the bramble pricks him and his horse stumbles in a pool of mud; he fears the wolves and trembles at the owl's cry, but beneath all is the sheer spiritual terror of darkness unconnected with wild beasts or thieves, the unreasoning fear of night:

" Le Soleil se va perdant;
La splendeur dont il éclate
Peint là-bas dans l'Occident
Un grand fleuve d'écarlate.
Le jour est prest à finir.
Déjà mon âme est saisie
En voyant la Nuit venir
De cette paralysie
Qui trouble ma fantaisie
Et confond mon souvenir.

O cieux! quel fâcheux arest!
Quel calice faut-il boire
De passer une Forest
Durant une nuit si noire ?
Il a plu sur ces ormeaux,
En entrant dans ce bocage
Je recontre des rameaux
Qui m'aspergent le visage.
Par un triste changement
Que produisent les ténèbres
Le Bois et les Elémens
Ont pris des habits funèbres."

[1] *Le Promenoir de deux Amants.* Between 1640 and 1645.

The solidity of Nature is by no means always assured. Desportes lamented her inconstancy in terms as forcible as those of Sénancour, when he longed for " des hommes vrais, un climat fixe "; all changes except the bitter torment of his love, the only constant element in a variable existence:

" On voit changer les jours, les mois et les saisons,
Le Soleil se remue en ses douze maisons,
Toute chose se change,
Rien n'est dessous le Ciel qui soit ferme et constant
Sinon l'aspre regret qui me va tourmentant
D'une fureur estrange."[1]

Man at times is troubled by the problem of his smallness in the immensity of Nature, and that not infrequently in an age for which size and magnitude have so strong an appeal, and though it is very rare, if indeed it ever happens at all, that he credits Nature with the vindictive personality that belongs to the pessimists of Romanticism, yet he may still be appalled by her physical size and feel with Pascal that he is terrified at " le silence éternel des espaces infinis."

Although the cheerful mood prevails, we find the melancholy and even gloomy aspect of Nature elsewhere than in the lover's lament, of which we have already spoken. Among the exponents of this darker side is the Duc de Montplaisir when he gives us the description of a solitary sea-coast where he wanders reflecting on his fear of death and his alternating desire for the end of life and his hopeless love for Sylvia.[2] The same Propertian echo is heard in *L'Hiver*;[3] all things perish

[1] *Complainte* (*Bergeries*).
[2] *Stances*: *Désespoir*. About 1634.
[3] *Stances*: *L'Hiver ou le Séjour des Ennuis*. About 1631.

but himself; he alone is preserved from the real and spiritual frost by his love. But it is for him a devouring flame, that protects him from the cold against his will, and the second poem is no less bitter than the first. Such gloom is, however, rare in this period, especially where the traditional, elegiac note is absent.

Needless to say the seasons form an important part of the subject-matter of this poetry. The seventeenth century does not equal the sixteenth, or even the fifteenth, in its rejoicings at the return of Spring, and the majority of poets have made a comparatively poor thing of this fruitful material. It is, as we have said, common enough in the pastoral drama, but in lyric poetry it appears more often among the *précieux* poets as an analogy for the revival of gallantry than the stimulus to serious love. Vion Dalibray, for instance, gives us a *Rondeau* savouring of Charles d'Orléans, but lacking his quaint imagery. Perrin subscribes a few brief *chansons* in which the return of Spring is linked with the arrival of some royal personage. But on the whole the existing poems are disappointing—light to the point of triviality, sometimes licentious and often artificial.

Summer does not often stir the imagination of this age in lyric poetry other than the pastoral, though there the hour of mid-day and the heat of the sun forms a common source of inspiration. The subject of Autumn is rather rare; the idea of the passage of time and the decay of the year which makes of Autumn a season of regrets is found in comparatively few cases, but it is interesting where it occurs. One of the most fervent mourners over the ravages of Autumn is Desmarets

de Saint-Sorlin in the last of his *Promenades de Richelieu*.[1] Desmarets is overwhelmed by the loss of Summer; he sees in the advancing season nothing but the promise of damp and darkness; even the colours that Autumn paints " sans art " on the leaves only provoke him to lament their former green:

" Tous ces lieux pour six mois seront mélancoliques
De n'avoir du soleil que des regards obliques;
Aussi bien de ses fleurs la terre est dépouillée ;
Quel plaisir de fouler l'herbe toujours mouillée?
Je ne vois qu'à regret les arbres moins feuillus;
Les vents leur font la guerre et ne les flattent plus.
Je ne vois qu'à regret les couleurs différentes
Dont l'Automne sans art peint les feuilles mourantes;
Leur beau vert si riant tout à coup s'est changé
En jaune, en amarante, en rouge, en orangé
Déjà de leurs rameaux la plupart descendües
Souffrent un triste sort sur la terre étendües
Ou, viles, sans repos, elles servent d'ébats
Aux cruels aquilons qui les mirent à bas."

But if Autumn usually evokes regret and a sense of loss, much more may be said of the season of Winter, and here appears perhaps, in negative fashion, the appreciation of the Summer days. Winter is at this period the dead season of the year, when the reluctant gentleman is confined to his house, and frequently to town, and bears his confinement with grumbling indignation:

" Rien ne fut jamais si mutin
Que ce méchant mois de novembre,"[2]

[1] *Vide* M. Hervier's article, " Le thème initial de l'Automne," in the *French Quarterly*, Sept., 1923.
[2] L'Hyver.

growls Sarasin, and Bois-Robert, shivering on the Pont-Neuf, declares that

> " L'air qu'on y respire est de glace:
> On n'y peut marcher sans grimace,
> Le manteau tout autour du cou,
> Le nez caché, comme un filou."[1]

Le Père le Moine speaks of " l'outrageuse froidure "[2] that spoils the leaves and Boursault of the " quatre ou cinq meschants mois "[3] to which he is condemned. In fact the feeling of resentment at the arrival of Winter is only equalled by the regret for the warm days. In some cases, naturally, the distaste for Autumn and especially Winter are merely the outcome of a dislike of the physical and material inconveniences caused by cold and bad weather. But the above examples are sufficient to show that there is sometimes something more. Man borrows his mood from the appearance of Nature or uses his descriptions to reflect his feelings; the poignant regret in the lines of Desmarets reveals the intimate connection between the writer's emotions and his theme. Conversely, the return of Spring and Summer sometimes expresses the more joyful side of man's nature and his brighter moods.

[1] L'Hyver de Paris. [2] L'Hyver. [3] L'Hyver.

CHAPTER VII

THE THEME OF SOLITUDE

Among all the aspects of the attitude towards Nature in the classical era there is none more interesting than the treatment of the theme of Solitude, which occupies so surprisingly large a territory in men's minds in this sociable and somewhat sophisticated age. The idea of retreat into Nature seems at first singularly out of keeping with the classical tradition in France, which makes man the centre point and focus of all art, and the suppression of the personal element in literature accords strangely with the idea of solitude in Nature, which we are apt to connect with the lyric enthusiasms of Rousseau, Chateaubriand or Lamartine. Yet we have ample evidence that the seventeenth-century Frenchman, in spite of his sociability and his love of Paris, had developed a taste for solitude apparent in most of the great writers and in a host of secondary authors, who have all at some given time, taken steps to realize this desire and effect a reteat into Nature.

A certain section of the French public looked with doubt and even suspicion on any man who took it upon himself to forsake the select society of his peers and live a solitary life. A considerable amount of resistance is sometimes offered to this course of action, the relatives and friends of the gentleman sparing no pains to bring

him back to the normal state characteristic of the age. The classical example is Zoon, in the *Filles de Minée* of La Fontaine. He was pleasing to the eye, says the poet, but that is not enough; his habit of fleeing from towns and living in the woods, a " concitoyen des ours," had given him a dark humour and a mean wit, which made his good looks seem ill-placed. He passed his fairest days in a loveless condition, and was condemned accordingly by La Fontaine, who distinguished quite clearly between the idea of retreat and that of perpetual solitude, praising the former, but finding nothing but censure for the latter state, as contrary to social and to natural laws.

The Jesuit Father René Rapin[1] also gives us the story of a man who lived a solitary life near Paris, on the banks of the Seine, and tended his garden, which " was to him his wife." This gentleman was inspired with a love of Nature and an intimate knowledge of her properties, which is perhaps rare at this time. He filled his garden with rare flowers and " wholesome herbs," and spent his days in close contact with the plants and trees. Unfortunately he was in possession of a group of indiscreet friends, to whom he revealed the secrets of his medicinal herbs, with the result that multitudes flocked to his refuge to find a cure for their varying ills, and the hermit was forced therefore to abandon his chosen life. Père Rapin points no moral: the love of solitude is incompatible with the love of society, and in such conflicts society easily triumphs.

A stranger fate perhaps awaited a certain unnamed solitary, whose history penetrated into the gossip of

[1] *Of Gardens;* Book I, Flowers. *Hortorum.* 1668.

the *Nouveau Mercure Galant* of August, 1677. This unsociable young nobleman forsook his home and the society of his friends, because his father had determined to force him into matrimony. He took refuge in a magnificent manor on the banks of a river, where he lived a life of retreat and communion with Nature. His wily parent, thoroughly disapproving of this unnatural behaviour, carefully stage-managed on the river the shipwreck of a lady of many personal charms and a very questionable reputation. The woman was offered a substantial reward, the boatman heavily bribed, and the father looked to win his undutiful son back to a love of the world. This romantic episode had, however, much more than the desired effect upon the unsuspecting young hermit, who first played his allotted part of rescuing the apparently drowning victim and then turned the tables on his father by marrying her, thus prolonging indefinitely his retreat from Paris and turning his life of isolation into a "solitude à deux"! "Beaucoup de gens parlent advantageusement de la solitude, et en dépeignent la tranquillité," says the editor of the *Mercure*, rather cynically, "et cependant on voit peu de solitaires." And we gather from his tone that in his opinion the love of solitude is little more than a caprice of the fashionable world.

A third example of this feeling of contempt for the solitary appears in the later poetry of Saint-Amant, who had made his name by the *Ode to Solitude* in the early years of the period,[1] but whose reputation as a singer of Nature was later eclipsed by his fame as one of the hardest drinkers in Paris. One of his drinking songs, dedicated to his "Cher ami, Monsieur Faret"—

[1] Between 1610 and 1613. Saint-Amant died in 1661.

a convenient name because it rhymes with *cabaret*— reveals his real, or assumed, contempt for anything but a sociable life:

> " Relasche un peu ta servitude,
> Ne cherche point la solitude
> Si ce n'est par fois dans ces Vers
> Que j'ay donnez à l'Univers."

After which apostasy the poet goes further, exclaiming that the country has no charms and that

> " Les moindres Escots des Tavernes
> Te plaisent plus cent mille fois
> Que ne font les Echos des bois."

" Et à moi aussi," he concludes jovially, in case the simple-minded reader should fail to associate him personally with the ideas expressed above. Is this the real opinion of the writer? Like the conclusion of Horace in the Second Epode, the poem is provocative in its defiance of the very tastes which the writer admires elsewhere.[1] It is, at any rate, the statement of a point of view which was probably popular among his tavern friends.

Yet these very sources from which we have quoted above have provided us with some expressions on the subject of solitude widely diverging from these. The *Nouveau Mercure Galant* on the same occasion prints the following sonnet, which is worth quoting in full, since it expresses the sincere affection for Nature, the love of solitude and contempt for material advantages,

[1] In " La Solitude," for instance :

> " Je ne cherche que les déserts,
> Où rêvant tout seul je m'amuse
> A des discours assez diserts
> De mon génie avec la muse."

and finally the idea of the importance of self-knowledge which are characteristic features of the solitary of the seventeenth century.

LE SOLITAIRE.

" S'élève qui voudra par force ou par adresse
Jusqu'au sommet glissant des grandeurs, de la cour,
Je prétends sans quitter mon aimable séjour
Loin du peuple et du bruit rechercher la sagesse.
Là, sans crainte des Grands, sans faste et sans tristesse,
Mes yeux après la nuit verront naistre le jour,
Je verray les saisons se suivre tour à tour,
Et dans un doux repos j'atteindray la vieillesse.
Ainsi lorsque la mort viendra rompre le cours
Des bien heureux momens qui composent mes jours,
Je mourray chargé d'ans, inconnu, solitaire.
Qu'un homme est malheureux à l'heure du trépas,
Lors qu'ayant négligé le seul bien nécessaire,
Il meurt connu de tous et ne se connaît pas!"

Apart from this patronizing attitude towards the solitary as a being who, if not completely abnormal, is at all events subnormal in his constitution, there is a strong feeling in favour of solitude as a theme of lyric poetry and as a state, whose attainment is of great advantage to its possessor, for a period of time at least.

The majority of the great writers, Saint-Amant,[1] Théophile de Viau,[2] Balzac,[3] Racine,[4] Molière,[5] La Fontaine,[6] Boileau,[7] and a host of others, have sung the charms of solitude and the benefits of the simple life. In most cases this idea forms the chief subject of the

[1] *Ode to Solitude.* Bewteen 1610 and 1613.
[2] *Solitude.* Between 1620 and 1626.
[3] *Lettre du 4 Sept.* 1622.
[4] *Promenade de Port Royal, c.* 1658, and *Stances à Parthénice, c.* 1667.
[5] *Princesse d'Elide.* II, 1.
[6] *Songe de Vaux. c.* 1671 ; *Songe d'un Habitant du Mogol,* etc.
[7] Ep. VI. *A Monsieur de Lamoignon.* 1677.

work, while in a few it is expressed by implication only, as for instance in Renaud's soliloquy in the second act of Quinault's *Armide*. Sometimes the theme is of such importance, that it recurs constantly throughout the author's work, as in La Fontaine, who dwells with pleasure on the idea of solitude and retreat from the world.

In 1583 the publisher Lucas Breyer compiled a small volume of poems (many of them imitated from the Georgics), dealing with the pleasures of country life, and the book met with such success that further editions, in somewhat modified form, were published throughout the next century.[1] Here appeared the *Ode* of Desportes, *Sur les Plaisirs de la Vie Rustique*, which, with the Epode of Horace, gave to Racan the inspiration for his *Stances sur la Retraite*, about 1618. Both poems breathe the love of country life; both, in spite of Malherbe, are full of poetry and charm, but in neither case does the " hermit " contemplate a life of complete loneliness. Desportes peoples his solitude with nymphs, while Racan dwells on the joys of labour and family life in the manner of Virgil.

There existed also, at this time, an anthology of lyric poetry entitled the *Parterre du Parnasse François*,[2] a collection of poems from the time of Clément Marot up to the year 1709. In this volume the poems are arranged by subject matter, beginning with *la Raison*, *l'Amour*, etc. There is no group devoted to Nature, but there is one on the subject of Solitude, containing

[1] L. Arnould: *Honorat de Racan*, p. 125.

[2] Le Parterre du Parnasse François, un nouveau recueil des Pièces les plus rares et les plus curieuses, des descriptions, caractères, allusions, pensées morales, ingénieuses, et galantes des plus célèbres Poètes François, depuis Marot jusqu'à présent. Par Monsieur Bonafous. The edition in the British Museum is dated 1709.

nine poems by well-known authors, not including the famous *Solitude* by Théophile de Viau, nor yet that of Saint-Amant. The author has prefaced his collection with Virgil's lines:

> " Et vos ô lauri carpam et te proxima myrte,
> Sic positæ quoniam suaves miscetis odores,"[1]

and includes in his group on Solitude nine poems beginning with eight lines from Boileau's SixthEpistle,[2] which he entitles " Les Charmes et les Avantages de la Solitude." There follows a sonnet,[3] the *Stances* of Lalane, with their insistence upon the innocent pleasures of Nature and the growth of wisdom and self-knowledge in solitude, some more lines from Boileau's Sixth Epistle,[4] a passage from Molière,[5] a poem by du Trousset, the *Stances* of Racan, and the decasyllabic lines of the Abbé Régnier: *Les occupations d'un homme qui vit dans la solitude*, with a personal, intimate note which gives them a touch of distinction and lends an interest to the rather platitudinous sentiments expressed. *Le Parc de St. James à Londres*, by Bonafous himself, concludes the series. There is ample evidence, therefore, that there exists a good deal of poetry that deals with the subject of retreat into Nature, and that it comes from the hand of all classes of writers, not only from the inconspicuous or the second-rate. There is clearly a ready acceptance of what seems, at first sight,

[1] Eclogue II.

[2] " Qu'heureux est le mortel, qui du monde ignoré
Vit content de soi-même en un coin retiré," etc.

[3] " S'élève qui voudra par force ou par adresse."

[4] Beginning with " C'est dans ce lieu charmant . . ." In reality the second paragraph.

[5] *La Princesse d'Elide.* Act II, Sc. 1, lines 1–12. " Que j'aime à demeurer dans ces paisibles lieux ! . . . Rencontre une si belle, et vaste solitude."

a pleasure out of keeping with the tastes of the age, and the explanation lies in certain important elements which form the literary make-up of the seventeenth century.

The first of these elements is the influence of Latin poetry on French verse. The general theme of solitude and retreat into Nature is largely suggested by the Georgics of Virgil and the poems of Horace.[1] There is rarely, it is true, among the Latins, the sense of a personal communion with Nature or the idea of a solitary retreat unconnected with any thought of labour and the establishment of family life and a little Utopian kingdom in the country. Yet the general idea of withdrawal from the world is there, and there is abundance of poetry and colour, a love of the outward manifestations of Nature and the many joys and physical pleasures she offers to mankind, but the idea of the true hermit, the solitary who dwells with Nature for her own sake, is not found at this early period. He is a product of a later and, in Europe at any rate, of a more sophisticated age.

A second determining factor in the history of the taste for solitude is the influence in France of Tasso's *Jersualem Delivered*, which gives a new direction to the hermitage fancy. The famous Palace of Armida,[2] built on an island, supposed to be Teneriffe, isolated in the middle of the sea and transformed by the enchantress into a marvellous garden, was a source ofinspiration to a great number of writers of the seventeenth century. This theme is a very old one, and is repeated in the literature of various countries, such as the Garden of

[1] *Vide* Chapter III.
[2] Described in Cantos IX–XVI of the *Gerusalemme Liberata*.

Alcinoüs in Homer,[1] the Islands of the Blessed in Pindar[2] and several romances of the Breton cycle.[3] The details vary in the different settings, but the main idea is a constant one: the picture of an ideal land, set apart from the world among " perilous seas, in faery lands, forlorn," peopled with legendary or invisible beings, who give succour to the wanderer therein, and endowed with a miraculous climate in which flowers of all lands and all seasons can grow. It has already been popularized in Italy by Poliziano,[4] Boiardo,[5] and Ariosto,[6] and indeed, it is very difficult to tell how far the French writers have borrowed from Ariosto and how far from Tasso, since the reference is sometimes to Alcina and sometimes to Armida, and the two great epics were both well known. However, it is probably chiefly from Tasso himself that the seventeenth century borrows its idea of an oasis, in the desert of civilization and the commerce of man, where gardens and buildings vied with one another in beauty and magnificence, and where, it must be owned, the creature comforts played a most important part. The idea of a retreat into Nature as wonderful as this might well appeal to men and women whose eyes were filled with the glories of Vaux, Marly and Versailles. The Palace of Armida becomes a commonplace among the expressions of the *Précieux*; " c'est un vrai palais d'Armide " is the highest praise that they bestow, and the *Jerusalem Delivered* was translated into French three times between 1625 and

[1] *Odyssey*, Book VII.
[2] *Olympian Odes*, II, 68.
[3] *Vide* Rajna: *Le Fonti dell' Orlando Furioso*, 1900, Ch. V., p. 164, where the sources of Ariosto's garden of Alcina are very thoroughly examined.
[4] *Stanze*, 1494, I. 70.
[5] *Inn.* II, iv, 20. Description of the garden of Falerina.
[6] *Orlando Furioso.* Canto VI, etc.

1667,[1] the famous enchantress, with her magic palace and gardens, becoming the centre of much imitative literature, especially in the *précieux* drama and lyric poetry. So strong a hold does this charmed solitude take on the minds of the time, that the Palace of Armida and combat of the knights in the rescue of Rinaldo is the subject of one of the most magnificent of the *fêtes* held at Versailles, staged by the Duc de Saint-Aignan and described in the *Recueil des Nouvelles ordinaires et extraordinaires* in May, 1664,[2] as a three days' performance. Here the form is borrowed from Ariosto, but the story is of course the same. This particular type of retreat into Nature is especially popular with the *Mondains* and the *Précieux*, such as Madame de Sévigné, Mademoiselle de Scudéry, and Quinault, or with the comfort-loving La Fontaine, whose Temple of Venus in the *Amours de Psyché et de Cupidon* bears a faint resemblance to the fairy castle of the Italian poets. The feeling of isolation and security which retreat into Nature brings to the would-be hermit is thus tempered by the taste for luxury, ease and pleasure, which belongs to the world of man. The dwellers in the Palace of Armida are not completely cut off from the world outside; there is a temporary withdrawal only, and, either by human means or by magic, in the poems and tales of the period, they take

[1] There had already been five translations in the course of the sixteenth century.

[2] No. 60, "Les Particularitez des Divertissements pris à Versailles, par leurs Majestez." In this spectacle, "les plaisirs de l'Isle Enchantée," Saint-Aignan, the King and the Duc de Noailles took the parts of Roger, Guidon le Sauvage and Oger the Dane, and the Duc d'Enguyen (sic) was Roland, supported by the Dukes of Guise, d'Armagnac, de Foix and de Coaslin and many other gentlemen of the court. The Knights wore appropriate colours and arms, but the first three were "vêtus à la Grèque," since the King had a fancy for this particular costume.

steps to insure a possible invasion from the society that they have left outside. The eternal boy in human society is manifesting here his healthy love of the desert island, with its marooned captives, but the final rescue is an essential part of the scheme, and the seventeenth-century gallant who adopts this kind of retreat accepts the prospect of his ultimate escape from seclusion as inherent in the idea.

A third influence, of a more serious nature, must have contributed towards increasing the taste for solitude in this otherwise sociable age. The idea of the religious solitary, strengthened so forcibly by the example of Port Royal, has penetrated into the classical theme, adding to the original feelings that of a love of retreat for its own sake, apart from any utilitarian purpose. A new colour is thus given to the subject, and we find, in consequence, a group of poems glorifying God in the solitary communion of Nature, and imbued with the spirit that prompted Rapin to write:

> "The boughs, th'unbroken silence of a wood,
> The leaves themselves demonstrate that some God
> Inhabits there . . ."[1]

or Arnauld d'Andilly to find in the murmur of the stream, the birds' song and the colour of the flowers voices and signs

> "Qui de l'Autheur de la Nature
> Célébrent les grandeurs, et monstrent les beautez."[2]

It does not necessarily follow that any religious feeling is present in the resultant poem. In his book,

[1] *Of Gardens.*
[2] *Ode sur la Solitude; Œuvres Chrestiennes.* 1659.

L'Art français au temps de Richelieu et de Mazarin, M. Lemonnier, discussing the reasons why religious art is decadent in the seventeenth century in France, points out that the influence of classical paganism penetrates even into this branch of art,[1] producing a curious mixture of the Christian and pagan elements. So it would seem here that the Christian idea may have pervaded the pagan theme, giving it a new direction and modifying the practical attitude of mind which is the more obvious heritage in France of the Latin poets. Probably, too, the influence of Eastern mysticism, which is filtering through translations into seventeenth-century literature, as, for example, in the frequent sources of the *Fables* of La Fontaine must be included as a determining factor. The hermit is not always, therefore, the shepherd of the Greeks or the husbandman of the Romans; he often becomes instead the St. Jerome or St. Antony of Christian history, or more often still the familiar figure common to every troubled age, when retreat into Nature is based upon no other motive than the enjoyment of Nature herself.

It is not, as one might expect, in the pastorals and tragi-comedies that we find the love of solitude in Nature: on the contrary, they seem to provide very few instances of this taste. The pastoral, with its conventional setting, is social in subject, and its shepherds and shepherdesses have one important interest: the enjoyment of social intercourse and the unravelling of their tangled love affairs.

Among the many advocates of solitude we find a variety of reasons alleged in defence of a retired life.

[1] P. 18. He gives as an example a head of Christ with the features of the classical Jupiter.

Most frequent of all, perhaps, is the idea of the simple enjoyment of life in the country, the poet himself reigning supreme over his little family, observing the labour in the fields and sometimes actually taking a part in it himself. Here he practises all the pleasures of country life; he watches the harvest and the vintage; he hunts and walks with Racan, or he fishes and reads with Boileau, the main point being that he sees definite, practical advantages in a life in the country, and retreat is largely for him a withdrawal from town life and an establishment of a miniature kingdom of his own. This type of solitary is modelled on the Latin original, and is familiar with the benefits of Nature described by Horace and Virgil.

An additional reason commonly supplied by the hermit of this school is the desire to seek safety from evil, whether it be physical or moral, and to rid himself of the cares and anxieties of life in the world. Often, as in the case of some of Racine's early verse, this is merely the wish to escape from some vague uneasiness which the poet does not specify; sometimes it is the flight from definite ill, as in Monsieur du Trousset,[1] whose wish is to live without fear and without desire, but, above all, without envy. Often, again, the theme is the innocence of Nature and country life and the freedom from moral ills that attend the dweller in the fields. The longing for peace and quiet preoccupies the mind during this age more than we are inclined to suppose, during the comparatively tranquil period that succeeds the appearance of Malherbe. The withdrawal of the Princesse de Clèves[2] from the temptations

[1] Quoted in the *Parterre du Parnasse François*.
[2] *La Princesse de Clèves*. 1677.

of the court, and her sojourn at Colomiers, is a characteristic example of this kind of retreat.

A large number of writers express, however, wishes more positive than the mere avoidance of evil. The importance of self-knowledge and reflection, the overwhelming desire for independence of thought and action make a strong appeal to this thoughtful and energetic age. The wish for retreat is not necessarily connected with the expression of religious feeling, it is more usually accompanied only by some commonplace statement about the passage of time, the approach of age, and the vanity of human desires. This type of solitary has his own moral education in view, and, like an anonymous contributor to the *Nouveau Mercure Galant* in 1677, he considers that the worst evil that can befall a man is to die known to all and yet unknown to himself:

> " Qu'un homme est malheureux à l'heure du trépas,
> Lors qu'ayant négligé le seul bien nécessaire,
> Il meurt connu de tous, et ne se connaît pas ! "[1]

A more positive element of religion is less common, at least in the poetry of this time, and it is usually supplied by the Church, as, for example, in the Ode on Solitude by Arnauld d'Andilly, brother of the great Arnauld of Port Royal and translator of the lives of the Saints.[2] His verses celebrate the retreat of one who retires from court and from the world and praises God in Nature. The Abbé Régnier also has an ode on the same subject, and in Book II of the Latin poem on Gardens, by Père René Rapin, translated into English by John Evelyn in 1673, the same theme recurs.

[1] *Nouveau Mercure Galant*, Août, 1677.

[2] *See also* Pierre Perrin : *La Chartreuse*, especially the conclusion of the 3rd Ode. *Œuvres de Poésie*, 1661.

These writers insist on the fact that all concrete nature forms a hymn of praise to the Creator and that the flowers and birds are notes in the eternal concert of sound. Neither the idea nor the expression has great originality in the majority of authors; there is sometimes a lack of spontaneity which detracts from the merit of the verse.

The "retraite amoureuse," which is one of the oldest themes of lyric poetry, is less common in this age than might be supposed. It must be remembered that the *Précieux* group is, on the whole, sociable in its affairs of the heart; in Mlle. de Scudéry's "Carte de Tendre" the four important stages in the affections, "Nouvelle Amitié," "Tendre sur Inclination," "Tendre sur Estime," and "Tendre sur Reconnaisance" are all large towns; the lonely places, the rocks, woods and lakes, are symbols of pride, indifference and other social and moral pitfalls; moreover the unfamiliar and unknown are symbols of danger, those *Terres Inconnues* on the same map, into which no member of polite society may ever venture to penetrate. It is not, therefore, among the frequenters of *Salons* that we look to find a taste for solitude.

But in spite of the modes of the *Hôtel de Rambouillet*, the idea of the lovers' retreat is strengthened by the popularity of the Alcinas and Armidas of Italy, with their enchanted gardens and their secluded groves. Poets of the rank of Desportes and Saint-Amant have treated this theme; and various songs on the same subject appear in the *Nouveau Mercure Galant*, especially during the second half of the century; there is, however, no instance of a well-known poem in which this idea is the central one. On the other hand, it is

not infrequent at this time to come across the converse; the solitary in literature who has retired into Nature with the object of avoiding matrimony and substituting his garden or his woods for any other ties. Usually, as we have shown in the case of La Fontaine with the *Filles de Minée*, the authors of these poems regard their characters with considerable disapproval when such an event takes place.

We have seen that the seventeenth-century solitary values the moral advantages of Nature: freedom, independence, self-knowledge, peace and innocence; it must be owned that he is far from impervious to its physical pleasures. He likes the song of the birds (his birds being nearly always nightingales), and the scent of the flowers (which are generally lilies, carnations or roses), and above all he enjoys the pleasant murmurs of waters, not alone because of their harmonious sound, but because such murmuring sends him to sleep. La Fontaine, Mlle. de Scudéry, Quinault and a number of less well-known writers put forward this attraction as one of the charms of solitude—sometimes their desire is to "rêver doucement"—sometimes quite frankly they retreat into Nature in order to have their after-dinner nap. In any age the majority of solitaries like silence; in this, not a few make practical use of it.

A pleasant solitary, who moralizes mildly on the benefits of country-life, deriving intimate pleasure from the different aspects of Nature, without indulging in a detailed examination of her forms, is the Chevalier de Méré, the friend of Pascal. "Pour moi qui suis un peu solitaire et qui me plais beaucoup à rêver," he writes in a letter to Miton, "les déserts quand il fait beau, ne me déplaisent pas. Les assidus courtisans

ne pensent qu'à leur fortune ou qu'à leurs amours. La différence des saisons leur est inconnue, et ce n'est pas le soleil qui fait pour eux les beaux jours . . . J'aime les chants des oiseaux dans les bocages, le murmure d'une eau vive et claire, et les cris d'un troupeau dans une prairie. Tout cela me fait sentir une douceur naturelle et tranquille . . . Je ne crois pas que personne goûte plus que moi cet air vif et gai du printempts, ni les plaisirs de l'automne. Un beau jour, une douce nuit, me charment . . ."[1]

Less common is the close observation of Nature by the hermit, but there is nevertheless a group of men who withdraw from the world largely for the pleasure of observing the animal and insect life in the woods or the phenomena of astronomy. These seem to be found chiefly among the religious solitaires, such again as the Abbé Régnier and René Rapin, who are moralists rather than naturalists and use their Nature study to instruct their correspondents or their readers : " The end of that Poetry is as of all the rest, to teach," as Rapin explains in his Preface. Thus Régnier repairs to a shady hill, where, with his mind at ease, he watches the stream, observes the black ants hurrying to and fro, follows the trail of a grasshopper or a worm, or the flight of the butterflies hovering overhead. Thus " like a flitting bird " his mind wanders, reflecting long on the order and structure of Nature, and trying to penetrate her mysteries, but coming back at last to the study of man " qui de l'homme est la vraie étude."[2]

Lastly we insist upon the statement with which we

[1] Quoted by M. Strowski in *Pascal et son temps*, vol. 2., p. 255.
[2] *Les Occupations d'un homme qui vit dans la Solitude. Poésies Françaises.* Published about 1707, 1708.

began, that the theme of solitude is to be found in nearly all the great writers of the age. The early works of Racine are full, not only of a profound feeling for Nature, but of the desire for solitude. It is true that his late correspondence reveals none, and his early letters little, of that feeling. His life at Uzès seems to have been dull,[1] and only on one occasion does he mention the subject of retreat, and then with little enthusiasm.

But of this love of Nature very little appears in his work, and in his drama practically nothing at all. It is the early poetry alone that reveals this side of Racine's nature, and, in particular, the *Promenade de Port Royal*, whose subsidiary title was *Le Paysage*.[2] Here, in spite of the crudity due to the poet's youth and the occasional " pointes " whose elegance was then in vogue, we have an instance of a sincere feeling for country-life and landscape, expressed in lines which have simplicity and melody, however far removed they may be from the choruses of Esther and Athalie. We know from the testimony of a personal friend, namely, La Fontaine, how much Racine delighted in leaving the town and finding for his walks a quiet, distant place, where few people were to be found ; how he " greatly loved gardens, flowers and shade "; how, during the reading of *Psyché*, he showed less appreciation than his

[1] *Lettre* à Mlle. Vitart, 15 mai, 1662.

[2] *Vide* also a passage from the *Mémoire sur les cinq dernières années passées* par M. de Pontchâteau à l'abbaye d'Orval, par un religieux de cette abbaye. The lines contain a description of the wild and rocky district in which the abbey stood, and conclude with the statement : " M. de Pontchâteau ayant vu cette maison et en ayant admiré la situation devint amoureux d'une si charmante solitude . . ." The Abbé de Pontchâteau was a Jansenist and a nephew of Richelieu. (Quoted by A. Gazier : *Le sentiment de la nature avant Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, 1695–1721).

friends (Boileau and Chapelle) because he was " dying to show them the wonders of the garden " of Versailles; how he broke into verse at sight of the Orangery and interrupted the arguments of his friends to point out the beauties of the sunset: " ce gris de lin, ce couleur d'aurore, cet orange, et surtout ce pourpre, qui environnent le roi des astres."[1] The narrative of the visit to Versailles told by La Fontaine insists at frequent intervals on the love of Nature in Racine, that provoked the friendly irony of the fabulist (who loved Nature himself, but indeed " aimoit toutes choses "), and checked the enthusiastic discourses of the sober and less imaginative Boileau and the gay Chapelle.

It is, of course, obvious that Racine's aim is in part a moral one; his primary object is to sing the praises of the solitude in which that part of his life was spent, and the fourth verse of the second Ode is dedicatory in tone, recalling the religious fervour of the young poet at this epoch. But the " holy dwellings of silence " are the home of his faith, and therefore he sets himself to sing their praises, not by means of philosophical or mystical verse, but by the description of their outward aspect, in a fashion characteristic of a mind still immature, ready to grasp the concrete and tangible rather than the inward essence of things, and of a talent which to the end retained much of its youthful sense of the picturesque. So in the foreground of his picture we see the great church and the old cloister, wherein dwell the " mille anges mortels," and, like some landscapes of Lorrain, where the architectural features dominate the scene, the Odes of Racine preserve the importance of his sacred buildings over

[1] *Les amours de Psyché et de Cupidon*, 1669.

their natural surroundings. The purity, simplicity and inherent goodness of the monastery and its inhabitants are his central theme. Their splendour is not based upon the suffering of the people like the palaces of the Kings, and the moral perfection of the monastery is in harmony with the Nature around it, which forms, as it were, a reflection of its qualities of simplicity and innocence.

But beneath the moral subject is the simple appreciation of external Nature that belongs to the country lover, and the greater part of the Odes consist of straightforward natural description. First the scene in full, and then its lesser details: the hillsides, the woods, the pond, the meadows with their flocks and herds, and finally the gardens, or rather, the orchard, for Racine's garden is primarily for practical use, and contains mainly fruit-trees. The note of contempt with which he concludes the Sixth Ode, deriding " Ces fleurs inutiles et vaines," is in keeping with the delight in the usefulness of Nature, nor does it really reveal in him a want of appreciation of flowers, which he admires in several instances;[1] his feeling is doubtless that of the pupil of discipline and order who is ready to admire everything, provided he finds it in its proper place.

The reproach that there is no individuality in Racine's landscape[2] and the implication that he shows therefore no real love of Nature, seems unwarrantably severe. Ode IV, *De l'Etang*, at least, has sufficiently precise details to suggest the possible identification of the spot chosen, even if affection for Nature were necessarily

[1] Ode V, line 6 ; V, line 50 ; VI, line 1, etc.

[2] *Vide* the introductory note to the *Promenade* in M. Paul Mesnard's edition of Racine's works.

inseparable from accuracy of description and attention to detail.[1] Ode VII, if more material in subject, contains in its catalogue of fruits a series of portraits of the various trees which would make this garden easily distinguishable among others. More open to criticism in fact is the somewhat prosaic manner in which Racine displays his goods before his reader's eye ; his tendency is to enumerate, sometimes with rather too much emphasis, the different features of the scene. The reader feels a little too strongly the impression that the poet has determined to lay before him all the advantages of the monastery, and to spare him none of the blessings of its surroundings. The method of enumerating one by one, in topographical order, the features of the scene, is slightly wearying at times in its rather unimaginative monotony.

Yet the Odes are by no means devoid of the sense of mystery which is one of the charms of this kind of verse in the early nineteenth century. Peace, retreat and silence are among the benefits that the poet observes. It is in the dark woods that quiet reigns, where the sun cannot penetrate with ease:

> " L'œil du monde voit a regret
> Qu'il ne peut percer le secret
> De ces lieux pleins de charmes ":

and the more he shines, the more they take arms against his burning splendour. In the sleeping waters of the pool also he discerns untold treasures of colour, light and shade, a mysterious charm peculiar to the water and to the enchantment and deception of the reflected forms.

[1] *Cf.* the vagueness of Lamartine's method in *Le Lac* and even in *Le Vallon.*

Frequently, however, the poet dwells on the more material pleasures of Nature, the sound of the birds singing, or the murmur of water and the patches of colour that summer provides. In his observation of colour and sound Racine shows no great originality in the *Promenade*. His sounds are comparatively commonplace and few in number; his colours, though frequent, are crude, and there are no fine shades: the woods are emerald, or simply green, the skies azure, or it may be sapphire, and gold; the water is crystal and the flowers and birds alike enamel the fields and trees. Sometimes there is a more individual touch, as when he describes the long row of willows ringing the meadows and bending the "silvery brightness of their dark foliage" over the streams. Or again, there is the charming picture of the hundred little amber and golden cups opening to catch the shower of light and dew at dawn:

> "Là, quand le jour rapporte au monde
> Le beau tribut de sa clarté
> Et que l'ombre et l'obscurité
> Rentrent dans leur grotte profonde,
> Là, dis-je, des portes du ciel,
> On voit de perles et de miel
> Choir une riche pluie,
> Et Flore, pour ce doux trésor
> Ouvrir, toute ravie,
> Cent petits bassins d'ambre et d'or."

In the same way the sense of sound is sometimes productive of pleasing lines, even when there is no particular originality in the conception; the little breeze kissing the trembling leaves, charming all sorrows with their gentle sighs and joining their bright music with

the birds' song,[1] or the naïve strains of the flute and pipes greeting the fall of dusk until the " precious stars, paling on earth, seem to return into the skies."[2]

Racine becomes perhaps most enthusiastic and most interesting in his colouring in the final Ode, that describes the fruit trees of Port Royal, the shining palisades covered with the " belle neige empourprée " of the peach, and the " petit soleil," the apricot that tempts both taste and eyes. The scarlet and golden lines of the fruit among the sombre foliage make a striking picture, and place Racine among the small, but interesting, group of fruit-painters of the seventeenth century.

The fertility of Nature appeals to the poet, as to most of his contemporaries. He dwells not only on her productiveness in the Ode on the Gardens, but also in the one on the Herds, the Sixth, and perhaps the least poetic of the Odes, where the fat heifers and sheep fill him with rapture over the gifts of Nature. Her force and energy excite his admiration, whether symbolized by the racing colts and the fighting bulls, or merely by the swiftness of the streams and the strength of the wind. Racine's admiration of force is typical of his age, but in the young poet it is not always the disciplined energy that appeals to his epoch as a whole, it is principally the unfettered powers of Nature that charm his mind:

" La nature est inimitable;
Et quand elle est en liberté,
Elle brille d'une clarté
Aussi douce que véritable."

[1] Ode III, lines 50–60.
[2] Ode VII, lines 80–90.

The birds building their nests in the freedom of the woods, the deer wandering fearless among the holly and fern, and the colts running free through the grass and threatening the air and winds with their fierce neighing; all these things are specially mentioned by the poet, and strike an unusual note in an age where man rejoices in his power over Nature and prefers her, on the whole, disciplined, not free.

Finally we would add that the Odes are singularly free from two common characteristics of the contemporary Nature poetry, namely, the pastoral element and mythology. Immature in talent as they are, these poems are the straightforward and simple expression of the writer's affection for the country; he observes and states directly what he has seen; he has no need to depend on the medium of the pastoral convention nor to look to mythology for analogies wherewith to convey his meaning. The sincerity and spontaneity of the *Promenade* make much of the value of these too little known early verses of the great poet, " tout épris des fleurs, de la rosée; des ombrages et des eaux, y laissant volontiers courir son vers fluide et un peu brillanté, mais ému, et déjá sans doute y mêlant tout bas de vagues et chers fantômes."[1]

Another famous apology for solitude is found in the VIth Epistle of Boileau, whose lines are too well known to need quotation, especially as they add nothing new to the subject: a sincere affection for Nature and appreciation of mental repose, a practical common sense, these characteristics descend from Virgil and appear at the beginning of the age in Racan. Still it is interesting to note the " solides plaisirs " that distract the

[1] Sainte-Beuve : *Port Royal.* t. VI, p. 90.

poet. Some of these are rather prosaic, no doubt—Nature is not here an end in herself, yet Boileau has modernized his subject and brought it into closer touch with seventeenth-century life. The idyll of the husbandman, which at this date had become pure fiction, has gone, the poet, like Ronnsard, occupies his mind with a book or with useful meditation, or yet again with fishing and shooting.

Of course, the great singer of the solitary life is La Fontaine.[1] As M. Régnier says: " La Fontaine tenait à faire une vertu de l'amour de la solitude cherchée pour elle-même." In the *Songe d'un Habitant du Mogol* the element of religion is lacking; it is Nature alone for which the poet yearns, Nature and her attendant pleasures of silence and the " secret charm " of solitude. The joy of sleep in the heart of the country is a desire peculiar to the heart of La Fontaine, a new delight added by the incorrigible dreamer to the store of the joys of solitude in his age. The singular feeling of pleasure that the theme inspired in him is proved by the frequency with which he returns to it—in the fable of *Le Juge Arbitre, l'Hospitalier et le Solitaire*, for instance, where he emphasised the necessity for self-knowledge, only to be gained in solitude. Of his attitude towards the perpetual solitary enough has already been said.

Finally, what more classic example have we than that of the famous " solitary " of the age, Alceste, who pictured a lonely desert as the perfect background for the frivolous Célimène ?

The idea of Nature as a retreat is, therefore, much more popular in the seventeenth century than one is at first inclined to believe, and in spite of the apparent

[1] *Vide* Chapter VIII.

contradiction between this quality and the well-known tastes of the age. Moreover, the theme has the greater number of characteristics that it has in other and later times. The spirit of pantheism, which distinguishes it among some of the late Romantics, is absent here, and the feeling of union with Nature is, as we have shown, rare, but the other and more prosaic joys which can be obtained from solitude are all present. Finally the seventeenth century offers us three distinct types of solitary: firstly, the hermit who retires into Nature for positive reasons, such as the sheer love of solitude and the country, or for religious motives, secondly, the man who wishes to obtain from her more practical and material advantages, and this, it must be owned, is probably by far the larger class, and lastly, what we might call for want of a better term, the temporary hermit, who, like Aramis, the "mousquetaire par intérim," adopts the solitary life for any of the foregoing reasons, but pursues it for a definite period of his existence only, his time-limit being set by his importunate friends, by the exigencies of fashion, or by his own invincible love of society.

CHAPTER VIII

MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ AND LA FONTAINE

The affection of Madame de Sévigné for Nature is characteristic of her age, frank, cheerful, unsentimental and sincere. Endless letters from her home at Les Rochers, or from Livry, describe the beauties of the gardens and woods, and her pleasant, tranquil country life. The air is more healthy at Les Rochers than elsewhere, the atmosphere more conducive to happiness; even when she is ill, recovery seems nearer here than in Paris, and during periods of absence she pines to be back in her beloved woods. "Je vous assure, ma fille," she writes to Mme. de Grignan from Nantes,[1] "qu'il m'ennuie ici: M. de Molac, ni les Mesdames, qui me font tant d'honnêtetés, ne me consolent point de n'être pas dans mes bois . . ." Her regret at leaving her country home is only equalled by her joy at returning there, a pleasure flavoured by the delights of ownership which make Les Rochers of far greater value in her eyes than the country through which she travels on her journeys, which she appreciates, it is true, but in a somewhat modified manner.

The natural gaiety and vivacity of Madame de Sévigné's character are apparent in her attitude towards Nature. Everything here, as elsewhere, is a source of pleasure and amusement. The moments of depression

[1] Ed. "Grands Ecrivains," VI, p. 398, vendredi, 17e mai, 1680.

caused by the darker aspects of Nature are rare; winter is only a source of sorrow if it is too cold for her to leave the house, or if it does damage to the trees; even wet weather, often a cause of grief and discouragement to the average mind of the age, is for her the origin of frequent entertainment. If the bad weather is unduly prolonged, then she declaims against it with all the energy of her active mind: "Il y a huit jours qu'il fait ici une pluie continuelle . . . Je suis dans une tristesse épouvantable; . . . nous lisons, cela nous soutient la vie," she exclaims at the end of a long period of wet in the June of 1671,[1] but a heavy shower overtaking her and her party on their walk is a common ground for amusement, and even for delight; "on crie, on tombe, on glisse . . . on pâme de rire," is a typical conclusion of such an account to her daughter.[2] Moreover, rain often enhances the beauty of the trees in her estimation; "Ces bois sont toujours beaux: le vert en est cent fois plus beau que celui de Livry. Je ne sais si c'est la qualité des arbres ou la fraîcheur des pluies: mais il n'y a pas de comparaison."[3] The appreciation is interesting; the fact is noted simply, and without detail, by the writer, but, except for the poet Saint-Amant, the case of appreciation of rain and its material effects, is very rare and Mme. de Sévigné may well assert: "Mon humeur est heureux, et s'accommode et s'amuse de tout."[4]

The elasticity and curiosity of her mind led her to set great store by the variety which Nature affords. Her energetic disposition naturally inclines her to

[1] II, p. 239, Aux Rochers, ce mercredi, 10e juin, 1671.
[2] II, p. 333, Aux Rochers, dimanche, 23e août, 1671.
[3] IV, p. 193, Aux Rochers, dimanche, 20e octobre, 1675.
[4] II, p. 297, Aux Rochers, dimanche, 23e août, 1671.

prefer the Spring, with its period of new growth, to the other seasons of the year, but her love of change no doubt also finds satisfaction in the varied appearances of the trees during the months of March and April, when she examines with passionate curiosity the opening buds and the gradual development of the red to green among the leaves. Not only the note of the proprietor is apparent here, but the lyric enthusiasm of the imaginary creator who observes the goodness of her work: " J'ai si bien fait, que le printemps est achevé: tout est vert. Je n'ai pas eu de peine à faire pousser tous ces boutons, à faire changer le rouge en vert . . . en cas de besoin je saurois fort bien faire un printemps . . ."[1] The example is one among many, all of them equally enthusiastic, though most of them rather less original. It is perhaps this taste for variety also which urges her to fell trees in great numbers: " Car que faire aux Rochers, à moins que l'on ne plante ? "[2] so that she may indulge her love of planting new ones, and thus vary the appearance of her woods. In the same way she constructs mazes, *boulingrins* and parterres, and continually plans new avenues; many of her letters inform her daughter of the number of new avenues which have been built since her last visit. Except during the periods when she was crippled with rheumatism and unwilling to trust herself to the mercy of the uncertain weather, and until such time as the declining fortunes of the family compelled her to retrench expenses, the property of Les Rochers must have undergone incessant improvement and change.

[1] Lettres Inédites, t. 2, p. 371, Aux Rochers, ce 26e avril, 1690.
[2] IV, p. 243, Aux Rochers, mercredi, 20e novembre, 1675.

With this gay cheerfulness of spirit there is, not unnaturally, a lack of the inclination for *rêverie* which belongs to some minds. True, she often dreams in her gardens and woods, but they are dreams of practical substance, and usually concerned with the doings of her large circle of friends. The " belle Fontanges " who has lost her health and the heart of the King, so that she is at once " une créature si heureuse et si malheureuse,"[1] occupies the reflections of the writer for some time as she wanders through the woods of her land. Gossip about her acquaintances, friendly criticism of her intimates, witty and ill-natured sarcasms at the expense of Mlle. du Plessis, or fervent outpourings of her affections for her daughter: these are the stuff of which her dreams are made. At times, however, a note of something more intimate, more melancholy and more original is struck: in the frequent regrets for her daughter she sometimes enlists, half unconsciously, the sympathy of the Nature that she loves: " Songez . . . non, ne songez à rien, laissez-moi tout songer dans mes grandes allées, dont la tristesse augmentera la mienne: j'aurai beau m'y promener, je n'y trouverai point ce que j'y avois la dernière fois que j'y fus,"[2] she laments on one occasion, when anxiety about her daughter's health had added to the pain of parting.

In a disposition so full of the love of society and a delight in conversation it is at first odd to note the taste for solitude that pervades many of the passages on Nature. In fact, solitude, quiet and even darkness, are constant objects of praise and the evident aim that

[1] VI, p. 540, Aux Rochers, 17e juillet, 1680.
[2] II, p. 226. A. Malicorne, samedi, 23e mai, 1671.

directed much of the planning of the grounds. This apparent contradiction is explained by the love of liberty and the firm independence of mind that are among Mme. de Sévigné's most marked qualities. With all her liking for society and her extreme affection for her daughter she has a character which is essentially self-reliant; she withdraws deliberately from her associates when she has had enough of their company. " Je vais être seule, et j'en suis fort aise ": she writes from Vichy in 1676, " pourvu qu'on ne m'ôte pas le pays charmant, la rivière d'Allier, mille petits bois, des ruisseaux, des prairies, des moutons, des chèvres, des paysannes qui dansent la bourrée dans les champs, je consens de dire adieu à tout le reste; le pays seul me guérirait."[1] This occasional aloofness causes her to extol solitude in Nature to the extent of building an avenue entitled " la solitaire "[2] where she might find relief from the gay world introduced by her son Charles, and even to the point of rejoicing in the absence of that same son when in July, 1671, she quotes a verse from the Ode to Solitude by Saint-Amant, declaring: " Il me plaît de m'y promener le soir jusqu'à huit heures; mon fils n'y est plus; cela fait un silence, une tranquillité et une solitude que je ne crois pas qu'il soit aisé de rencontrer ailleurs."[3] Only when her health fails do we find a waning of her love of being in the country and being alone; the rheumatism that in the year 1675 affected her so badly provoked a sadder mood: " Il faut une grande santé pour soutenir la solitude et la campagne; quand je l'avois, je ne craignois rien . . . "[4]

[1] IV, p. 474, A. Vichy, lundi au soir 1er juin.
[2] VII, Aux Rochers, dimanche 8e septembre, 1680.
[3] II, p. 279, Aux Rochers, ce 15e juillet.
[4] IV, p. 386, Aux Rochers, mercredi, 18e mars.

At all other times her independent spirit rejoices in the occasional loneliness that she procures for herself in the middle of society. We have noted already that this taste is a characteristic of the age. Perhaps it is a general, as well as an individual, mark of the independence of mind which belongs to this generation.

Like her contemporaries, Mme. de Sévigné shows a strong preference for trees. The maze, the parterres and the birds' song excite her admiration, and the labours of the peasants stimulate her curiosity, as she wonders at the lightness of the dancers of the *bourrée*, admires the strength of the smiths, or watches the vintagers carrying home the grapes, or her own workmen felling trees. But it is the trees themselves that form the constant subject of her descriptions. She observes them with wondering delight in every phase of their existence, and shows an almost maternal interest in their growth. " J'ai trouvé ces bois d'une beauté et d'une tristesse extraordinaires," runs a letter of the 29th September, 1675, " tous les arbres que vous avez vus petits sont devenus grands et droits et beaux en perfection; ils sont élagués, et font une ombre agréable; . . . Il y a un petit air d'amour maternel dans ce détail; songez que je les ai tous plantés, et que je les ai vus, comme disoit M. de Montbazon, *pas plus grands que cela*."[1] On the whole it is the young trees that arouse in her the greatest enthusiasm: " the surprising beauty " of her little trees recurs constantly in her letters; " Tout de bon," she declares, when describing the work of Pilois in her avenues, " rien n'est si beau que ces allées que vous avez vu

[1] IV, p. 149, Aux Rochers.

naître."[1] Not unnaturally her affection for her daughter is closely linked to the fondness for the young trees; it is the ancient theme of Nature as a witness to the joys and griefs of man. At times even the big trees are ruthlessly sacrificed to make room for the small in case they should " incommoder mes jeunes enfants."[2] At others Mme. de Grignan and she take delight in inscribing mottoes on the trees; some of these are purely moral and contain no special allusion to the woods, others reveal the owner's delight in her domain, like the device posted in the dark little avenue in the October of 1671:

" E di mezzo l'horrore esce il diletto."[3]

It is not very often that Mme. de Sévigné distinguishes between the different trees in her letters, though in her rhapsody on the creation of spring she notes the order of the hornbeam, the beech and the oak. The orange-trees of Clagny excite her admiration; these, like her own forest trees, are a source of surprise and delight. It is part of the charm of her natural description that she takes nothing for granted; the childlike faculty for wonder is as marked in the late letters as in those written twenty years before; consequently her observations, like her feelings, are always stimulating and new.

In all this brilliant and entrancing spectacle colour plays a very small part. Once again Mme. de Sévigné is characteristic of her time; her sense of colour, though not entirely deficient, is crude. The trees are

[1] II, p. 230, Aux Rochers, dimanche, 31e mai, 1671.
[2] II, p. 255. Aux Rochers, dimanche 28e juin, 1671.
[3] II, p. 388, Aux Rochers, mercredi 14e octobre.

green; in October they are of the same green as in May;[1] only at Les Rochers the green is more beautiful than at Livry; there are no fine shades. The falling leaves are "feuille-morte" in October; in November those clinging to the trees have changed their colour, and in describing them the writer indulges in a rare expression of the picturesque; "Au lieu d'être vertes elles sont aurores, et de tant de sortes d'aurore, que cela compose un brocart d'or riche et magnifique, que nous voulons trouver plus beau que du vert, quand ce ne seroit que pour changer."[2] Otherwise the young buds are red and the full-grown leaves are green, and the enchantment of the description lies, not in the colour at all, but in the provocative charm of the writer's style.

In considering the contribution of La Fontaine towards this subject, we can do little more than recall the facts. So much has already been said that it would be superfluous to attempt to analyse the matter as fully as its importance demands, for La Fontaine is the one other writer besides Mme. de Sévigné in whom posterity has agreed to acknowledge the love of Nature so often denied to the age. We will content ourselves therefore with a brief examination of a few important features.

In his choice of his medium La Fontaine has not adopted the animal world only in imitation of Æsop or with the desire to "instruct men," he is reproducing in literary and artistic fashion a class of beings with which he was comparatively familiar. He drapes his convention, therefore, with a reality rare among the

[1] IV, p. 193, Aux Rochers, dimanche 20e octobre.
[2] V, p. 380, A Livry, ce 3e novembre, 1677.

natural phenomena of the greater number of the pastoral poets, whose personal acquaintance with their subject matter was small. This we know from the intimate accuracy of many of his sketches, which depends less on detailed description than on the tone of friendly familiarity that marks the poet's affectionate regard for the animal world. We have, besides, the testimony of a whole host of contemporary and later writers who have multiplied the instances of La Fontaine's fondness for Nature, both as a picturesque spectacle and as a habitation of beings little less interesting than the human race. A stream, says Taine, was enough to occupy and delight him, and he would spend his days wandering among woods, paths, stables and farms, or, forgetting his dinner, watch enraptured over the burial of an ant, escorting the funeral procession to the graveyard and home again.[1] Or again, to vanquish Descartes, he would marshal his reasoning powers in defence of the animal kingdom, giving in default of philosophical argument or scientific study practical examples to prove his point that the animal is not a machine. In his account of the hunted stag, forcing a younger animal to take his place as the quarry, or of the partridge feigning a broken wing to lure the huntsman past her nest, the poet is not arguing like a zoologist with a theory to uphold, he is defending a friend. Thus we have the note of personal sympathy which has no place in the argument as logic, but considerable value in moving the feelings of an impressionable jury: the wonderful strategy of the stag is often rewarded with an ignoble death; " ce sont là tous ses

[1] *La Fontaine et ses Fables;* Deuxième Partie. Chapitre II, *Les Bêtes.*

honneurs suprêmes," remarks La Fontaine sadly, while he joins with malicious pleasure in the partridge's triumphant defeat of man.

A number of facts reveal La Fontaine's familiarity with country life. Now it is the peasant, trapping larks with a mirror, or the master inspecting his wheatfields at harvest-time, the lark rearing a late brood, and the heron fishing in a stream, to mention some of the common instances. Naturally La Fontaine borrows many of his significant details from his predecessors, but there still remains a large number of little characteristic touches that help to build up his personalities and give life to his portraits.

This intimate affection for his subject-matter is, perhaps, one of the characteristics of La Fontaine as a Nature poet that has made most impression upon subsequent ages. But we have already seen, in the works of such men as Rapin, Racan and Saint-Amant[1] that the quality is less rare than it has been believed. Our opinions have been coloured by the genius of Taine and the reputation that the classical age had acquired in the early nineteenth century, and here, as elsewhere, we have been inclined to accept La Fontaine as unique. It is less in his personal affection for Nature that La Fontaine is peculiar in his age, but rather in the depth and extent of that affection, and in the manner of expressing it—the combination of sympathy, love, pity, humour and malice, which distinguishes all his personal relations.

His affection does not necessarily entail an accurate knowledge of natural history. What matter if the

[1] *Vide* Chapters V, VI.

snake stings with his tongue[1] and the rabbit reduces his figure to the size necessary for entrance into the hole of a beetle?[2] A defiance of the details of local colour which would have shocked the nineteenth century was tolerated in La Fontaine's day, and the essential, psychological truth of the fable is in no way violated. Nor are these errors very common. More frequently the poet succeeds in reproducing the significant characteristics of his animal population with the aid of a few picturesque touches: the irregular loping gait of the rabbit,[3] the restless, irritable hovering of the fly,[4] or the massing together of an army of rats;[5] a hundred examples, in short, which reveal the artist's power of observation, a power much more remarkable at this date than it would be to-day.

We need not attempt to enumerate the instances of plastic description of Nature which form the charm of so many of the fables; most of them are too well known to need mention; moreover, the subject has become familiar through the work of numerous biographers and critics of La Fontaine.[6] We would recall, however, the universality of the poet's interests; "il a tout senti," says Taine, ". . . sa sympathie suffit à tout" —the charm of the small flower garden and the kitchen patch, the habits of the birds, the vague yearnings of animal life and the tragedy of death, all is food for his poetic imagination.[7] Like others of his time, La

[1] VII, 17. *La Tête et la Queue du Serpent.*
[2] II, 8. *L'Aigle et l'Escarbot.*
[3] VII, 16, lines 8, 9. *Le Chat, la Belette et le petit Lapin.*
[4] VII, 9. *Le Coche et la Mouche.*
[5] XII, 25. *La Ligue des Rats.*
[6] *Vide* M. Boillot: *Les Impressions sensorielles chez La Fontaine,* Ch. IV, for a detailed examination of La Fontaine's treatment of landscape.
[7] Taine, p. 178.

Fontaine feels a peculiar thrill at the coming of Spring and the stir of new life in the woods and ponds, and, like Desmarets, his pity is awakened by the passive suffering of the trees, that are forced to grow contrary to Nature[1] and to undergo a rude destruction of their lives. For La Fontaine has his epoch's fundamental belief in the wisdom of Nature and an intense distrust of the pruning knife wielded by an over-zealous hand.

His attitude, even in moments of most tender sympathy, remains practical and sane. Nature is an object of interest, compassion and admiration, but an entity outside and beyond himself, a force worthy of respect and consideration, but in no sense the vehicle of his own emotions. Purely objective in outlook, he has none of the Romantic feeling for Nature, neither the inclination to regard her merely as a form of his own self-expression nor the desire to merge his personality in hers. With all his egoism La Fontaine distinguishes quite clearly between his own personality and that of his surroundings. His characters may be right or wrong in their judgments, but they are always independent; for no being does the poet express more contempt than for the monkey, the mirror of human vanities: " N'attendez rien de bon du peuple imitateur," he exclaims contemptuously. Similarly in his attitude to Nature we find a spirit of independence which fundamentally respects personality. Not, of course, that we find in La Fontaine the anthropomorphism of the early nineteenth century, which is practically unknown in this age, but he certainly has a conception of Nature as an objective reality, co-existent, but apart.

A very common theme in the Fables, and throughout

[1] XII, 20. *Le Philosophe Scythe.*

La Fontaine's work, is the happiness of a quiet life in the country, a revival of the classical idea which we have mentioned elsewhere.[1] This taste is closely linked with the love of freedom; the wolf renounces the pleasures of civilization that have made the dog a slave, the horse repents bitterly of the sacrifice of his liberty in his pursuit of vengeance, etc., etc. But besides desire for freedom, unhampered by the social obligations of labour and service, the country has a peace which the town with its perils cannot give, as shown by the tale of the country rat, who prefers his modest meal to all the magnificence of the town rat's feast. Thus La Fontaine recurs constantly to the joys of the pastoral life, the practical, physical pleasures which Nature affords and the moral advantages of self-contemplation and reflection which become unattainable in the crowded life of towns.[2] The *Songe d'un Habitant du Mogol* contains the essence of the poet's yearning for retreat, and is so magnificent an example of seventeenth-century Nature poetry, that we venture to quote the lines in spite of their familiarity:

" Solitude, où je trouve une douceur secrète,
Lieux que j'aimai toujours, ne pourrai-je jamais,
Loin du monde et du bruit, goûter l'ombre et le frais ?
Oh! qui m'arrêtera sous vos sombres asiles ?
Quand pourront les neuf Sœurs, loin des cours et des villes
M'occuper tout entier, et m'apprendre des cieux
Les divers mouvements inconnus à nos yeux,
Les noms et les vertus de ces clartés errantes
Par qui sont nos destins et nos mœurs différentes!
Que si je ne suis né pour de si grands projets,
Du moins que les ruisseaux m'offrent de doux objets!
Que je peigne en mes vers quelque rive fleurie!
La Parque à filets d'or n'ourdira point ma vie,

[1] *Vide* page 147. [2] *Vide* page 161.

Je ne dormirai point sous de riches lambris :
Mais voit-on que le somme en perde de son prix ?
En est-il moins profond, et moins plein de délices ?
Je lui voue au désert de nouveaux sacrifices,
Quand le moment viendra d'aller trouver les morts,
J'aurai vécu sans soins, et mourrai sans remords."

We have already made it clear that La Fontaine's love of retreat is strictly tempered with common sense, and that it is in no way anti-social:

" la raison d'ordinaire
N'habite pas longtemps chez les gens séquestrés."

The garden-lover was not wrong in taking a friend,[1] for a " doux et discret ami " is a wise addition to a garden; his error lay in taking an ignorant friend, whose customs were unsuited to his own. This combination of sociability and solitude is the natural outcome of the poet's love of moderation and distrust of all extremes. That is one reason why La Fontaine condemns his Zoon in *Les Filles de Minée*:[2] he has sinned against the virtue of moderation, whose observance the master of Nature has ordained for all living things, including undisciplined man.[3]

Just as La Fontaine's sympathy is extended to most forms of the animal world, his curiosity explores a very varied kind of scenery. In *Les Amours de Psyché et de Cupidon* Psyche wanders over a landscape with ever-changing scenes, from the wonderful gardens of Cupid, created in the poet's mind by reminiscences of Versailles, Reuil and the Gardens of Armida, to the mountain habitation of the old man and the scented fields around

[1] VIII, 10. *L'Ours et l'Amateur des Jardins.*
[2] *Vide* page 141.
[3] IX, 11. *Rien de Trop.*

the Temple of Venus. Here the descriptions are much more elaborate than in the Fables, and lack much of their grace and charm; La Fontaine, like nearly all his contemporaries, shows a feeling of mingled fear and awe of mountain scenery; the rudeness of the shepherd's cave dwelling makes a more forcible impression than its beauties, and the writer dwells at length on the dangers and difficulties of the path. But his curiosity is stimulated by a love of adventure in his descriptive writing; his heroine wanders through many lands and his scenes in his Fables include practically every type of European landscape.

If then we have dealt with La Fontaine so briefly, it is not that there is little to say, but that so much has been already said. We may conclude by pointing out that, in the case of this poet, the very choice of the fable medium is a proof of his affection for Nature. Not that the fabulist is necessarily an animal lover because he makes use of this convention, but in the case of La Fontaine the balance between the animal and the human is so extraordinarily well maintained that the fable ceases to be merely didactic poetry. If La Fontaine cannot claim to be the only lover of Nature in his age, we can at least affirm that his study of Nature is the most universal and the most profound, that his poetic expression far exceeds in merit that of his contemporaries, and that he has raised his subject to the level of good comedy and sometimes moving tragedy.

CHAPTER IX

ART

It is perhaps unnecessary to point out the extraordinary confusion in art at the beginning of the seventeenth century in France and the great disparity of the elements that make up its composition. Nor is it easy to obtain a clear view of the subject at the end of the sixteenth century and at the beginning of the new age, since there is a great wealth and variety of material and a considerable lack of accurate historians. The same individualism and freedom from restraint reigned in painting as in literature before the days of Malherbe, and to some extent the two arts suffered the same process during the first half of the new age, a process of refinement and limitation, but, above all, a submission to control which is characteristic of the classical age.

Out of the chaos that marks the last years of Gothic art in France there emerge certain facts which prove important determining factors in the new direction taken by painting. To begin with, the court, which had led a wandering existence in the sixteenth century, now became stationary in Paris under Henry IV. Painting, like poetry, found its home in the capital, and became closely linked to the great buildings which dominate the city, in especial the Louvre. It was at this time that there began the great centralizing movement in the

art and literature of the country which was so striking a feature of the classical age. But to this act of centralization we must add another and overwhelming fact: the direct endeavour of Louis XIV. and his ministers to make French art not only the reflection of French life, and, in particular, Parisian life, but to make it the means of glorification of the French King, so that painting, sculpture and architecture should become, as it were, one glorious apotheosis of the ruling power, the constellation that revolved round its centre, the Sun.

The direct means employed to this end by the King was primarily the administration of the minister Colbert. He it was who became the protector of the Royal Academy and who founded the French Academy in Rome.[1] It was he who superintended the amazing work of the Italian and French artists at the Louvre, and who somewhat grudgingly directed the early additions and improvements at Versailles. It is important to remember that Colbert was intensely imbued with the idea of a national art in France at a time when the Flemish influence was powerful on the one hand and the Italian on the other. While he admired the Italians, fostered the Academy in Rome, and encouraged all French artists to study in Italy, the minister was determined that France alone should provide for the country's æsthetic needs. His is the all-powerful influence that pervades the art of this period, and that moulds all his material into a colossal mirror reflecting the personality and actions of his master the King.

Parallel with that of Colbert is the influence of Le Brun. This artist was the practical exponent of the ideas which Colbert had conceived. Painter and

[1] Hourticq: *L'Art de France.* 1911.

decorator, master of oils and tapestry designs, Le Brun had the same end in view, the conception of French art as a marvellous piece of mechanism in which each individual worked for the perfection of the whole, a triumph of organization and co-operation which is almost without equal in the history of art. From time to time we see individual craftsmen whose independent genius refused to submit to this central direction, a Coysevox maintaining all the arresting individuality of his portrait busts, or a Poussin conforming unwillingly to the dictates of the ministers, producing thereby mediocre work and giving nothing but dissatisfaction to his employer and to the King. But, in the main, painters and sculptors submitted to the system; they supplied themselves the work and originality of the details, but the main idea was given to them ready-made. Nor was this plan of centralization confined alone to the capital; in the larger provincial towns Colbert was able to provide decorative work for the artists of second rank, or for those who were unwilling to leave home. Paris was the centre of the system, but to Paris were linked such towns as Bordeaux, Marseilles, Toulon,[1] etc.

In strengthening and supporting the aims of Colbert and Le Brun, the Royal Academy of painting was a useful adjunct. It became the home of countless art critics, many of whom take a high place among the directors of painting in France, such as Félibien, Roger de Piles, Le Brun himself, Testelin and others. The increasingly systematic treatment of the subject was

[1] Hourticq: *L'Art de France*. Pt. II, Ch. iii. He gives as an instance of this fact Pierre Puget, who was employed on the decoration of ships at Toulon.

naturally accompanied by a great output of theory; the natural tendency of the age towards abstraction was augmented by the work of the critics and theorists, and the confines of art itself became gradually narrower. A similar process was operating in poetry under the guidance of Malherbe, and in the salons of the *Précieux* and just as the quaint dictionary of Sommaize and the *Commentaire sur Desportes* are a witness of the one, so the diagrammatic *Precepts* of Testelin[1] and the *Catalogue* of Roger de Piles[2] are a proof of the other. There is a strange inclination for statistics and formulæ which is the obvious product of an age which is specializing in over-organization.

The immediate consequences of this official direction operate both for the interests and disadvantages of art. Much scope was found for a great variety of good work which might otherwise never have seen the light. Material conditions were improved and craftsmanship was raised to a much higher standard than it had reached hitherto; there was a general raising of the tone of painting and, at the same time, a levelling down of the heights of individual talent and genius, and a serious loss of freedom for the individual. Such was the state of art during the long reign of Louis XIV.

We are considering then a period in which art is directed by certain rules, the outcome and expression of the system we have briefly described above. We

[1] Testelin : *Sentimens des plus habiles Peintres du temps sur la pratique de la Peinture*, 1680. He concludes with a kind of graph which shows in diagrammatic form the principles of painting.

[2] Roger de Piles : *Cours de Peinture*. At the end is a list of the most noted painters " and their degrees of perfection in the four principal parts of painting ; supposing absolute perfection to be divided into twenty degrees or parts." Thus Rubens is awarded 18 marks for composition, 13 for drawing, 17 for colouring, and 17 for expression, while Poussin has 15, 17, 6 and 15 for the four parts respectively, etc., etc.

must now summarize the most important of those doctrines, and see to what extent they are likely to affect the position of external Nature in art,[1] how much they limit the existence and practice of this *genre*, and how far they modify the landscape painting which was actually produced at this epoch.

There are two ruling ideas which govern all the literature and art of the seventeenth century: the love of antiquity and the interest in psychology. Classical history and the expression of the human mind are at the centre of all artistic production. We expect to find, therefore, and we do find, that these qualities will be the most obvious and the most important in painting as a whole and in the different *genres*. Given this important premise, we realize at once that the place of external Nature in painting as a whole must necessarily be small. That it is as large as it undoubtedly is, results, we think, from a curious faculty for conciliating rival interests which is a feature of this age, and to which we shall return later. But, besides this first limitation, we find another, which is also typical of the age. The seventeenth century has a passion for the " distinction de genres " which is not confined to drama alone. Thus we find, for instance, the complete separation of secular and religious art and the classification, according to M. Lemonnier,[2] of art into the following categories in order of merit: historical painting (which includes allegory, mythology, some religious painting, and history proper); portraits, landscape (which often becomes historical through the figures it contains),

[1] We are not, of course, concerned with the doctrines of art which have no bearing on this subject, and do not, therefore, mention them here.

[2] *L'Art Français au temps de Richelieu et de Mazarin.* Paris, 1893. Partie IIIe, Ch. I.

battle scenes, and lastly, flower painting and "peinture de genre." Such distinctions are necessarily very arbitrary, yet we find that Félibien leaves no room for doubt on the subject: "Celui qui fait parfaitement des paysages est au-dessus d'un autre qui ne fait que des fruits, des fleurs et des coquilles. Celui qui peint des animaux vivants est plus estimable que ceux qui ne représentent que des choses mortes et sans mouvement. Et comme la figure de l'homme est le plus parfait ouvrage de Dieu sur la terre, il est certain aussi que celui qui se rend l'imitateur de Dieu en peignant des figures humaines est beaucoup plus excellent que tous les autres."[1] We find, therefore, that the theorists place landscape painting considerably below historical painting and portraits, and that it is only raised to that position through the human element provided by the figures it contains.

Yet in spite of its secondary position among the different *genres* it is obvious that it was considered by theorists to be an important form of art. Félibien in his *Entretiens*[2] gives a sufficiently large space to the discussion of the details of landscape painting to prove that it was for him a source of great interest and a weighty element in the instruction of his pupil. Roger de Piles, one of the most interesting of the critics of the day, accords a special chapter to the subject of landscape, discussing its general importance and its merits in detail, and Testelin in his *Precepts* gives the subject considerable space. But were such testimony lacking, we have still the presence of at least a dozen

[1] Preface to *Conférences pour l'Année*, 1667, quoted by A. Fontaine in *Les Doctrines d'Art en France*.

[2] *Entretiens sur les Vies et sur les Ouvrages des plus Excellens Peintres Anciens et Modernes*, 1705. *Vide* especially the fifth Entretien.

well-known seventeenth-century artists, most of them primarily landscape painters, whose work shows us that in spite of restrictions and limitations external Nature played a fairly large part in the painting of the day.

In determining the essence of landscape painting we must above all things remember the paramount importance of the influence of Poussin. At the end of the year 1640 he came to Paris at the instance of Colbert and the King, and spent two reluctant years in the royal service. But unsuccessful as was his painting in France compared with the main body of his work, he had come to the capital with his fame and his fortune already made. He was already known as the creator of the type of landscape which was to make so deep a mark on French art: the heroic, or historical. It is unnecessary here to attempt to analyse the reasons of Poussin's popularity with his own countrymen; we need only concern ourselves with the facts. The majority of French painters spent some part of their life in Rome, many of them coming personally under the influence of the great master. There are few of them who do not reflect his work in one or another form.

It is Poussin then who is partly responsible for the popularity of landscape painting, and it is to Poussin, too, that we attribute the faculty of conciliating apparently conflicting interests mentioned above. For Poussin had the mind and tastes of his age: a highly developed sense of form, unusual clear-sightedness and keenness of intellect, the traditional love of antiquity and interest in the human mind. His was a talent which proceeded from the intellect and reposed upon the expression of an idea. But he was not devoid of a sense of the picturesque, and his sense of form was

coupled with a love of external Nature. The result of these qualities in Poussin appears in the evolution of the historical landscape, in which Nature plays an important part, but in which the human element is always of principal value. In some instances Nature plays a larger, in others a smaller part, but one factor is constant throughout: the preponderating human element against a background of Nature. In Poussin, in particular, the central interest of the picture invariably lies in the character, or rather in the dramatic crises, of the principal figures; he is Corneille, analysing the workings of the human mind and the interplay of intellect and emotion; he is Racine, catching his subject as near the climax as possible. And his landscape is therefore not only subordinate to his figures, it is in close harmony with them, a background whose value lies not only in its beauty, but also in its suitability. When de Piles, therefore, in his consideration of the rival merits of poetry and painting, remarks complacently that both satisfy the unities of place, time and object, he is right in so far as the seventeenth century is concerned. The great quality of Poussin's work is its unity,[1] and therein lies certainly one reason for his success with his contemporaries, for what is it but a particular aspect of the sense of form which is the great characteristic of his country and his age ?

Compare with this harmony of Poussin the position given to figures in the landscapes of Lorrain: Blanc[2]

[1] One can take no better example than the hackneyed one of the Shepherds in Arcady. The hint of mystery and tragedy in the midst of happiness, the uneasy questioning and gentle melancholy of the shepherds at the moment of their discovery of the tomb, is the subject of the picture. In admirable harmony is the quiet, restful landscape with a hint of storm in the distant clouds.

[2] *Histoire des Peintres;* 1861. *Lorrain.*

maintains that Lorrain divided the interest in his pictures by subordinating neither the figures to the scenery, nor the scenery to the figures. He points out that the artist may either introduce figures which do not specially attract the attention and stimulate the intelligence, or he may, like Poussin, make the landscape subsidiary. Lorrain did neither, in the majority of his pictures, and the result is a lack of harmony which is disturbing to the eye. Is this because Lorrain was sufficiently of his age to conform to the letter of the figure convention, but that he was less successful than many of his inferior contemporaries in conforming to the spirit, simply because he was less passionately attached to the purely intellectual than they, and because he had an affection for external Nature which was really in advance of his time ?

The opinion of the theorists on the importance of figures is clear. They must be in harmony with the landscape, says de Piles;[1] " the best way to make figures valuable is to make them agree with the character of the landscape, that it may seem to have been made purely for the figures." They should " represent some little subject to awaken the spectator's attention . . . ." Nor does this sentiment express any contempt for the landscape *genre*. It mainly affects the *subject* of the picture, and postulates a certain attitude of mind towards this type of painting which leaves the artist free to express the details as he will, provided only that his original outlook is right. It is true that the Abbé Du Bos[2] at the beginning of the next century goes much

[1] *Cours de Peinture.*

[2] *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture.* Paris, 1719. Section VI.

further in his demands. "Le plus beau paysage," he says, "fût-il du Titien et de Carrache, ne nous émeut pas plus que le ferait la vue d'un canton de pays affreux ou riant: il n'est rien dans un pareil tableau qui nous entretienne, pour ainsi dire; et comme il ne nous touche guère il ne nous attache pas beaucoup. Les peintres intelligents ont si bien connu, ils ont si bien senti cette vérité, que rarement ils ont fait des paysages déserts et sans figure. Ils les ont peuplés, ils ont introduit dans ces tableaux un sujet composé de plusieurs personnages, dont l'action fut capable de nous émouvoir et par conséquent de nous attacher . . . ils y placent ordinairement des figures qui pensent, afin de nous donner lieu de penser; ils y mettent des hommes agités de passions, afin de réveiller les nôtres et de nous attacher par cette agitation."[1] The first part of this discourse presupposes a narrower attitude towards pure landscape painting than that of the earlier critics and painters. The second expresses the doctrine which we have already described, and which, in this age, is perilous only for those who do not understand the principle upon which it is based. The fact remains that regulations affecting art will not disturb the artist like Racine or Poussin, whose sense of form is excellent, but the genius of a Corneille or a Lorrain will be continually hampered or cramped.

The first general principle, then, in seventeenth-century landscape painting is the presence of the human figure and the second is its function—namely, to provide a psychological interest. And since we are dealing in the main with the historical landscape we

[1] Incidentally Du Bos seems in the last lines to be going farther still and foreshadowing the sensibility of La Chaussée and Greuze.

come immediately to a discussion of a third important principle: the place and the quality of truth in the painting of the time. The same belief rules here as in literature, and we have but to refer to the *Art Poétique* of Boileau to remember that the *Probable* is preferable to the *True* and the *General* to the *Particular*. The theory will naturally affect both painting and literature in the choice of subject and in the nature of the composition. But it will have a special effect upon landscape painting, for it will help to postpone the date when landscape painting becomes the simple reproduction of natural scenes. Moreover, the preference for the Probable is strengthened by a circumstantial detail: painting from external Nature was comparatively little practised in this age. Lorrain imitated from his German master, Joachim Sandrart, the idea of painting from Nature direct, because he found that the results were attended by so much success, but Lorrain was exceptional in this respect; the majority of artists followed the advice of de Piles; they made detailed studies from Nature, and they frequently made the preliminary sketch from Nature direct, but the painting and the construction of the *ensemble* was done in the studio at home. Finally, the seventeenth century, with its passion for antiquity, sets great store by accuracy of fact and correctness of technique. The result, therefore, in the landscape painting of the age is that Truth is observed in the atmosphere, that is, in the meaning and intellectual plane of the picture, and there is an accurate representation of Nature in the details. But the scenes themselves are rarely the reflection of real places; from real details the artist constructs an imaginary, but a *probable and suitable* scene. Even

when he is portraying historical events he confines himself to truth of atmosphere rather than to the faithful reproduction of all the facts. So once more we may refer for an example to the famous argument about Poussin's Eliezer and Rebecca and the omission of the camels from the scene. Poussin was reproved by the lovers of history with inaccuracy of fact, and by the ecclesiastics with the falsification of scripture, but since Poussin's subject was the general and the psychological,[1] he was perfectly justified in suppressing the accidental details, which a century later would have made a strong appeal.

The subject-matter being thus defined by the theorists, there arose the matter of treatment, and here one precept stands out most clearly as affecting landscape painting, the belief that colour is of less importance than design, a tenet which is to be expected in this age. The critics indeed decided that the form is inherent in the thing to be studied, colour is accidental and subsidiary, and though they expound various precepts with regard to colour, it must not be forgotten that it is of less importance than form. Once more Poussin provides us with a practical example of this belief. It is also interesting to note that in the marks of the French artists in de Piles' *Catalogue* those awarded for colour are relatively low.

Two kinds of landscape were generally recognized. Besides the heroic or historical there was the pastoral or rural, which was produced by a limited few. Every-

[1] *I.e.*, the sudden and unexpected offer of marriage and its effect on Rebecca and her companions. This example has already been mentioned by most of the biographers of Poussin and carefully analysed by M. Lemonnier in *L'Art française u Temps de Louis XIV.*, 1911. Book I, Ch. i.

thing that is great or extraordinary in Nature[1] was to be represented in the first, the tone of which must be sublime. It possessed to some extent the qualities of the Epic in poetry, and gave an outlet to the contemporary love of grandeur and dignity. But the second was the representation of Nature unadorned, the country was abandoned to her caprice and was portrayed in the form of open fields with flocks of sheep or wild and rugged hillsides, " the retreat for solitary persons and wild beasts."[2] There was more room for creative imagination in the first in the sense that there was scope for the heroic style and food for the mind. In the second, however, there was greater truth and accuracy, that is, the artist had fewer materials to draw upon and, not having the same intellectual motif, was obliged to rely more closely on a faithful representation of his subject. But even here, says de Piles, the artist will be wise to introduce some " affecting, extraordinary, but probable effect of Nature,"[3] and instances the pictures of Titian as reaching the ideal in the pastoral form. In general, however, the critics aver that there is more scope for the creative faculty in landscape than in any other form of art, since here, above all, the painter is free to draw upon his imagination, " he may here dispose of all things to his pleasure, whether upon land, or in water, or in the sky, because there is not any production either of art or Nature which may not be brought into such a picture."[4]

The rules that affect the details of painting are no

[1] Roger de Piles : *Cours de Peinture. Le paysage.*
[2] Roger de Piles : *Cours de Peinture. Le paysage.*
[3] There is no more interesting feature in seventeenth-century literature and art than the balance kept between the extraordinary (le merveilleux) and the probable (le vraisemblable).
[4] Roger de Piles : *Cours de Peinture. Le paysage.*

less varied and numerous, but it will be sufficient to mention one or two. Great care had to be taken in the choice of scene, which should be as interesting and unusual as possible, always remaining, of course, within the bounds of probability.[1] If the site chosen were commonplace, much more attention should be given to the colouring. Nothing could be better than the choice of the legendary Arcadia,[2] which gave scope to the creative faculty of the artist and to the imagination of the reader by transporting him to an ideal country where men were always busied with their pleasures and had no other anxieties or misfortunes than those of the shepherds in the novels of the day. Naturally Poussin did much to popularize both this type of scene and also the landscape near Rome, which becomes a common feature of French painting.

The place that architecture occupies in landscape is large, and once more the reason lies probably in the human association. Buildings raise the imagination by the use for which they are thought to be designed.[3] Poussin, with the Roman manner, Bourdon with the Gothic, but above all Lorrain in his famous port scenes, and his disciple and imitator, Patel, are all examples of this trait. Trees, too, are of great importance: we have not only the testimony of the critics, but the work of all the artists as a witness to this. It is by the study of trees that the painter acquires variety of colour and form and he is recommended to study them, not only in the mass, but in detail, that he may learn to distinguish their age, their growth, their bark, trunk and

[1] Roger de Piles: *Cours de Peinture. Le paysage. Also* Du Bos: *Réflexions Critiques sur la peinture.* 1719.
[2] Du Bos: *Réflexions Critiques.*
[3] De Piles: *Cours de Peinture.*

leaves, etc., etc. Water is also a common feature, and to that element de Piles gives almost as much space as to trees. But though water, and especially still water, appears frequently in the pictures of this age, it is less popular than trees. Hills, and especially mountains, are little considered: they belong rather to the tortured scenes of Sébastien Bourdon than to the majority of artists. Their usual function is to provide a background, breaking the line of the horizon, or varying the monotony of the sky.[1]

The element in Nature which seems to provoke most enthusiasm and study in critics and artists alike is that of light.[2] Félibien in his *Entretiens* has discussed at length the value of light and shadow, and the power that may be acquired in art from a careful study of light, and de Piles devotes a whole chapter to the study of the "clair-obscur," basing his argument for correctness in the study of light on the necessity of unity in art, since "as in a picture there ought to be a unity of subject for the eyes of the understanding, so there ought to be a unity of object for those of the body." Hence we may see in Poussin's pictures the same spirit of unity preserved in the painting of light and shade, and in Lorrain we may observe the wonderful harmony that extends over the lighting of the architectural and natural features of the scene, and in especial the study of aerial perspective that is one of the finest qualities of his art. The study of light at this time is encouraged by an artistic and an academic interest alike.

[1] *Cf.* the background of most of the landscapes of Poussin, Stella, Lorrain, Patel, Gaspard Dughet and others.

[2] *Vide* Hourticq: *De Poussin à Watteau*, 1921. p. 63. "Un seul élément de la nature semble les avoir préoccupés : la lumière, sans doute parce qu'on en parlait beaucoup à l'atelier."

In the contemplation of the landscape painters and their work a difficult and delicate problem immediately arises, especially with reference to the two greatest and most famous: Poussin and Lorrain. How far, that is, are we justified in claiming them as exponents of French art, seeing that both passed the greater part of their lives in Rome and that in the works of both there is very little that reflects French landscape or indeed French life at all? Since it is obviously impossible to account exactly for the extent of the national element in any human being, it is wisest perhaps to enumerate the facts, and leave each reader to draw his own conclusions.

Poussin was born of French parents at Les Andelys in 1594 and from 1610 to 1612 studied under Quentin Varin, a wandering French artist, having previously taken lessons from Noël Jouvenet, a Rouen professor.[1] In 1612 he reached Paris, and in 1624 Rome. During these intervening years not very much is known of his life, but the fact remains that, though his artistic career begins, for all practical purposes, from the time that he arrived in Rome, he came to that city for the first time at the age of thirty, when obviously his taste and talent were partly formed. For forty years he dwelt in Rome, with the exception of two years, in 1639 and 1640, when he was working for Louis XIII. in Paris. In Rome he came mostly under the influence of Raphael, Carracio and Dominiquino, and none of his landscapes reproduce the scenery of his youth. Many of his biographers claim that his own country, therefore, has no part in the composition of his art. We will quote in opposition to this statement the following lines of M.

[1] E. Magne: *Nicolas Poussin.* 1914.

Lemonnier on the subject: "Quel rapprochement établir entre cette peinture grave, convaincue, où la pensée se concentre avec tant de force, et les œuvres brillantes ou banales d'un Guide, d'un Carrache, même d'un Dominiquin? L'Italie, nous l'avons vu, ne pouvait ouvrir à Poussin les sources morales de son inspiration, et le vrai Poussin n'est que là."[1]

The case of Lorrain seems a little less clear. Born in 1600 at Champagne, near Mirecourt, on the banks of the Moselle, Claude Gellée was a Lorrainer, not a Frenchman. He went to Rome at the age of thirteen, and his early landscapes reflect the influence of the Flemish artists. Between 1625 and 1627 he had a period of wandering through various countries in Europe, and revisited his home. A few drawings only remain as an example of his painting of northern landscapes during this time. It is claimed also that certain etchings and *La Fête Villageoise* are representations of the scenery of the north.

It is not necessary, for the facts are too well-known, to insist upon the real and intimate love of Nature that appears in Lorrain. In *Le Troupeau à l'Abreuvoir*, *Le Bouvier*, *L'Abreuvoir*, and many others, the human element is either non-existent or of very small importance, nor is the part of architecture of equal value in all these. Lorrain provides one of the few instances of Nature treated for its own sake, and offers a curious contrast to Poussin, who with all his fondness for Nature inevitably regards her as a background.

Of the other French artists of the time Gaspard Dughet, the brother-in-law and pupil of Poussin, may

[1] *L'Art français au Temps de Richelieu et de Mazarin.* 1893. Troisième Partie. Ch. IV.

be noted as a painter of storms and of the grandiose in Nature, which had been made popular by the historical landscape under the influence of Poussin. Nearly all produced this kind of scene rather than the pastoral,[1] but there is no lack of fine work among them; there is usually more grandeur and dignity than familiarity in their work. Wide scenes, drawn on a large scale, and centring round some human element, are the common example of this form of art.

A painter of a rather different kind, however, appears in the person of Jean-Baptiste Monnoyer. Monnoyer is a flower painter, who provides us with that peculiar form of decorative art which was popular under Louis XIV. He is less a lover of flowers than a *virtuoso*, who delights more in the exercise of his skill than in the study of his subject. Monnoyer furnished the " hôtels " of Paris and Versailles with countless baskets of hyacinth, narcissus, tulip, anemone, honeysuckle and rose, and is an instance of one small, but interesting use to which this age puts external Nature, that is, pure decoration. In this category also should be mentioned the flower and fruit paintings used for furniture designs and, in especial, the famous tapestries of the Gobelins and Beauvais. Here, in addition to the battle scenes which form the most popular subjects, we have the seasons and the months of the year of Le Brun, which, in spite of their personal application to the King, reflect a certain feeling for Nature; and not the least charming is the famous " Enfants Jardiniers,"

[1] Blanc includes among the names of seventeenth-century landscape painters the following :—

Poussin.	Gaspard Dughet.	Van der Meulen.
Jacques Stella.	Sébastien Bourdon.	Jean Forest.
Lorrain.	Patel, le Père.	François Milet.

which combine the graceful background of cultivated Nature with the labour of the children. Finally, the mural decorations of many of the rooms in the palaces and châteaux of France are instances of a knowledge of Nature combined with the most delicate and refined skill in painting, such, for example, as exist to-day in the "Salon de Louis XIII." at Fontainebleau, where much of the panelling is covered by flower designs, not conventional, but natural in form and colour, and revealing something more than a mere subject for decoration.

We may draw a few conclusions from this very brief survey. On the whole, Nature plays a surprisingly large part in the art of this epoch. We would venture to suggest that, whereas in literature it is to the writers of secondary merit, in the main, that we owe an appreciation of Nature in their principal works, in art the contrary is the case; many painters of first rank have included this subject. Does this proceed partly from the fact that Poussin, at least, was a great leader and originator of a *genre*, whereas La Fontaine, the noted exponent among writers, was too individual and too capricious to "faire école"? At all events the popularity of the subject in French art is greatly increased by the work of one or two men. Yet it is, as we have shown, a Nature which is confined very strictly within certain limitations, bonds which do not depreciate the affection of the artist for his subject-matter, but certainly direct and control his attitude.

A comparison of the treatment of Nature in literature and painting shows that in the main the attitude in both arts is the same. The relation between form and colour is similar, and the pre-eminence of the figure in land-

scape painting recalls the importance of the human element in the pastoral drama of the age. The allusion of Du Bos[1] to the suitability of Arcadia as the scene for pastoral painting is an interesting detail concerning the type of scenery chosen, while the preference for the probable and suitable in the choice of landscape marks the same taste for general truth that characterizes the pastoral dramatists who stage their plays against the real background of the French countryside. The presence of architectural elements in landscape painting, which certainly finds a parallel in the stonework of garden ornamentation, seems to be without counterpart in poetry, at least to any very great extent. Buildings have a place in poetry which is descriptive of real scenes, such as the gardens of Richelieu, or of Port Royal, and they figure to a certain extent in *L'Astrée* and some pastoral plays, but in lyric poetry their existence is not sufficiently noticeable to be worthy of mention. Of the different forms of Nature, trees and water, as we have seen, are prominent in all the different forms of art, together with a pleasant, undulating type of land, whereas mountains are rare, except as a distant prospect to break the monotony of the sky-line; when they are present in the foreground of poetry or painting it is always as a menace, or presage of gloom. Finally, light and the effects of light are a source of inspiration in all the different artistic forms.

[1] *Vide* p. 191.

CONCLUSION

This brief survey of the various manifestations of the feeling for Nature in seventeenth-century life and literature leads us to conclude that the subject is far more fruitful than is commonly supposed, and that we have been seriously misled by the vague generalizations of a society which has been nourished on early nineteenth-century criticism. The wealth and popularity of the descriptive literature of the Romantic period has so deeply impressed the succeeding ages that they have gradually narrowed the confines of a love of Nature to a love of Nature as felt by the Romanticists themselves. They have made inseparable the appreciation of the external qualities of Nature and the perception of a Nature spirit which is in communion with man, and they have established the opinion that a subjective attitude to Nature is indispensible to real appreciation and affection. Thus the existence of any feeling for Nature has been denied to the seventeenth century, and the few outstanding writers, such as Racan and La Fontaine, whose work depends largely on this quality, have been treated as notable exceptions to the general rule.

There is, as we have shown, practically no instance of Romantic subjective treatment in this age; Balzac comes nearer to the ecstatic communing of Rousseau than any other writer.[1] But on the whole the seven-

[1] *Vide* Ch. VI.

teenth century is objective in its bearing: Nature and the human race are two things apart. Physically the animal and vegetable world may be subservient to man; morally they are independent of him. Nature is neither a beneficient nor a hostile being ; it simply has no personality at all. In like manner the pantheism with which his opponents charged Lamartine, the personification of Nature expressed by Laprade's *Hermia*, and the radiant intimacy between man and Nature symbolized by Maurice Guérin's *Centaur*, have no parallel in the earlier age. Nature was then the creation of a superior Intelligence; there was no real confusion between the creator and the created.

The nearest approach, perhaps, to a personification of Nature is found in the contemplation of her reproductive faculty, a favourite theme in this age, and classical in origin. An echo of the worship offered to the goddess of fertility rings in the pastorals and in many lyric poems, including the *Fables* of La Fontaine. But here also the sentiment is peculiarly clear and precise. The writer admires in Nature the gift of fertility; he does not, except in rare instances, endow her with a conscious will to serve mankind. He may indulge in harmonious similes and display a sense of external beauty, but he does not see in Nature a being superior or even antagonistic to himself; she is only a magnificent, blind force.

The idea of communion with Nature, therefore, and the conception of a personality behind the external world, two features which give to Romantic description much of its poetic inspiration, are unfamiliar to this age. There is another quality likewise which is noticeably inconspicuous or undeveloped, namely, a sense of

colour. On the whole this is characteristic of painting, poetry and gardening alike. There is certainly a taste for vivid patches of colour, beds of tulips in masses of yellow or scarlet, brilliant hues of the trees, sky, etc., in descriptive poetry, but the choice is largely restricted to the primary colours; the range of intermediate shades is rare, and there are very seldom half-tones. Light, and the contrast of light and shadow, are popular in all forms of art, but in general the sense of colour is crude, and it is not abundant; there are neither the splendid masses of Chateaubriand, nor the fine shades of Bernardin de Saint Pierre.

On the other hand, there is, as one would expect, a wonderful sense of form. We have seen that in the laying-out of gardens, form plays a very important part. The classical mind delights far more in the shapeliness of things than in the variety of their colours; from the stone vases that adorn the *Quinconces* to the whole plan of the gardens themselves, Versailles is a triumph in the study of form, an expression of one of the purest kinds of art that has been devised by the brain of man, as perfect in design and shape as a tragedy of Racine, the outcome of an understanding joy in the undisguised beauty of line and contour. So d'Urfé draws in pencil outline the landscape of the Lignon and Desmarets dwells with satisfaction on alternating masses of light and shadow, as the moon throws into relief the structure of Rueil, while Poussin gives such thought to the grouping and shapes of his figures and trees that a photographic reproduction of his pictures gives almost as much satisfaction as the coloured original. In every kind of art the sense of form is one of the most important attributes.

Probably it is for this reason that trees and water are the most popular figures of Nature in this age. Whether in art, in literature, or in gardening, trees appear constantly as the centre of interest, generally in groups or large masses, sometimes in single forms. Clearly, in the arrangement of landscape, woods are an important factor for providing dark masses in the foreground and variety in the distance in an age which has little appreciation for hills. Water likewise has infinite variety of outline and can produce most satisfactory results for the eye trained to appreciate the figure in one plane. These two elements of Nature, with buildings, which so often contribute towards the composition of a landscape, are certainly those in which a sense of form can best find expression and in painting, poetry and gardens, they are both often found.

A particular aspect of this sense of form is found in the love of symmetry that characterizes the age. We have noted the balance and moderation of the art of Le Nôtre, and the faculty for regulating and weighing one with another the different elements that constitute a landscape, whether actual, or viewed through the intermediary of literature or art. This sense of balance and proportion is, we believe, a character of the classical period as a whole; it distinguishes the laying out of gardens and the arrangement of landscape painting; it also leaves its mark on the wooded valleys of d'Urfé and of many of the pastoral poets. An air of ordered regularity reigns everywhere, banning the violent, the undisciplined and the extreme, giving to everything an atmosphere both of energy and of calm. Thus the element of the extravagant and bizarre tends gradually to disappear from Nature as the age moves on; it is

replaced by the ordinary and familiar which rises triumphantly above commonplace monotony by the force of its conception and the simplicity of its style. Nor is the manner of treating external Nature in any sense illogical, or at variance with the principle of the age, namely, that disaster results from contraverting Nature. This art does not contradict or pervert; it guides, directs and restrains. It lavishes appreciation on the external world, but the outward forms of Nature must, like man himself, be submissive to discipline. The carefully arranged lawns and paths of Le Nôtre and his clipped trees do not proceed from a perversion of Nature at all, but from a desire to preserve an equilibrium that shall combine to maintain the unity of the whole, restricting any one part of the picture from overabundance.

Perhaps this instinct for moderation in the treatment of external Nature is increased to a certain extent by man's growing consciousness of his power. After all, not many centuries since Nature was a tremendous force, whose power was the more feared that it was so little understood. Even now, as we have suggested, mountains remain an object of awe, and the sea is more regarded for its perils than its charms. But the more familiar aspects of Nature, the woods, fields and waters of the country, have yielded more and more to the rule of man. Energy and science have increased his power over the trees and plants, as the many books on scientific gardening of the beginning of the century testify. The ruthlessness of the monarchy drove men to perfect the knowledge of engineering and hydraulics which remain the wonder of the age. It is not surprising that man, as his knowledge and power increase, exercises more

mastery over the thing that he is learning to control, not to use it unsuitably, but to make it serve his own purposes in a reasonable, sensible manner.

Therein lies also one explanation of that constant delight in force and size, that is a special feature of the gardening art. In the massive structures of Versailles, Chantilly and Fontainebleau we see a young and vigorous age wielding a new weapon and trying its powers. Added to this experimental effort we have the natural forcefulness and extraordinary vigour of this generation and the bold workmanship of a style which is so simple and unornamented that it has plenty of scope for construction on a vast scale. The result is the passion for size, space and light that combines the vitality and self-mastery of the age. Perhaps the epic spirit that has miscarried in *Moïse Sauvé* and kindred works comes to fruition in the simple magnificence of the gardens of Versailles.

Apart from an enjoyment of size and of form in the treatment of Nature it is perhaps the appreciation of its practical uses that strikes us most. The productiveness of Nature is the work of a beneficent power that provides for its creatures. Much of the delight in the contemplation of beautiful scenery proceeds from the joyful reflection on the material benefits to be derived therefrom. Ceres and Pomona are popular goddesses, and Poussin, with his Bacchic dances, portrays the spirit of his time, like the pastoral poets with their eulogies of the ripening corn or vines.

Equally classical in origin is the opposition of town and country life, which is a feature of this age. Obviously the growth of industry and the increasing size of modern towns have augmented the need for flight into Nature,

but the seventeenth-century town, though far smaller, was more limited in the opportunities it offered for escape: material conditions made travelling a toilsome and dangerous matter. Classical and religious tradition had both popularized the idea of an escape into the country for those to whom town life had become a burden, and gradually existence on the land had acquired advantages for its own sake; pleasure appeared in the labours of the husbandman, or at least in the reviewing of those labours. The monarchical spirit likewise rooted and flourished in the country domain; the enjoyment of a miniature kingdom became the aim of those who had a taste for ruling others. Finally, for those who desired the quieter side of a life with Nature there developed the love of solitude which seems to us an important aspect of the feeling for Nature in this age.

The frame for social life and gallantry which Nature provides belongs rather to the early than to the later part of the century. Man is, at this time, the centre point of interest, and just as contemporary artists frequently compose their scenery to be a setting for the human figures that the picture contains, so society has developed this side of natural appreciation. The pastoral drama, therefore, concentrates on the actions of the human characters, leaving the setting to provide a suitable background, and *précieux* poetry, more artificial still, conventionalizes flowers and trees to make a framework for its gallantry and wit. The last-named form of art is that in which the least amount of sincere appreciation of Nature is found and of which the accusation so frequently applied to the whole age is most true.

Otherwise we maintain that there has been much inexactitude in the opinions expressed upon the appreciation of Nature in this period. We have taken the Romantic attitude to Nature as the only one worthy of consideration; we have neglected the delight in natural forms, the admiration of the power and force of Nature and the sincere love of country life that the seventeenth century undoubtedly feels. But these things also contribute towards a love of Nature; the lack of a certain kind of imagination does not denote a complete absence of appreciation. The more matter-of-fact mind of the classical period may indeed, because of its inherent qualities, form a deeper affection for certain sides of Nature than a less practical age. Finally we would disagree with those critics who believe that the love of Nature, which is, after all, a very common lyric theme, has been suppressed in poetry here to appear in painting. It seems to us to be present in both arts to a certain extent, and if there is one form rather than another in which it has found wider expression, it is perhaps in the laying out of gardens. If there is less feeling for Nature in painting and poetry then than in other periods, we would suggest that the poets are not lacking because the lyric theme is absent, but rather that the lyric theme is somewhat restricted in use because most of the first-class writers have found expression in a literary form which admits of very little appreciation of Nature.

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